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THE WAY OF JESUS

by

CHARLES EDWARDS PARK

"There arose no small stir about that Way."

Acts 19, 23

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To W. W. F.

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FOREWORD

Shortly after the Crucifixion the Disciples had to "pick up the pieces" of their lives and decide what to do. Most of them found that the decision had already been made for them; there was but one thing they could do. Eighteen or twenty months of daily companionship with Jesus of Nazareth had influenced them so profoundly that their entire point of view was changed, and greatly for the better. He had taught them to think of God, the world, their fellowmen, themselves, their duty in a new way. And it was all so clear and self-consistent that they could neither forget nor ignore: they must tell others about it. Here was a new and an infinitely happier way to live. It was natural that they should call it just that: "The Way of Jesus," and equally natural that they themselves should be known as "The followers of the Way," or "Those of the Way."

Therefore for those first few years there was no such term as "Christianity." We are told, in Acts 11, 26, that the term "Christian" was first applied to them, probably as a term of derision, in the city of Antioch. But in later years this term took on a far wider connotation. It came to be applied not only to the friends and disciples of Jesus, who knew him in the flesh, recalled his words and taught them to others, but to all who for one reason or another found it expedient to adopt this new way of life and affiliate themselves with those who made it their way.

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry in Galilee, and it was less than two years later that he perished on the cross. That scant two years of active service fell upon the attention of his world as a searching and peremptory challenge which had to be met, but which filled the thoughtful minds of the age with dismay. He preached a religion of

such novelty and charm that millions of the humbler people, laborers, soldiers and slaves, were completely captivated and became his devoted adherents. At the same time his views were so revolutionary that the intellectual and educated classes could not for a moment tolerate them. We can easily imagine their dilemma. What were they to do with this Jesus of Nazareth? They could not ignore him, for his followers were too numerous and all too ready to make trouble. They could not liquidate him, for that expedient had been tried and had failed. His followers firmly believed that he had risen from the tomb, had appeared in person to his disciples, and had promised that he would come again, this time in triumph. The attempt to silence him by the crucifixion had rendered him an hundred-fold stronger and more influential than ever. On the other hand, they could not adopt his teachings and incorporate them in their own systems of thought for what he believed and taught was exactly contrary to their philosophy. Here was a man whom they could not silence, could not ignore, and yet with whom they flatly disagreed: how were they to get around the difficulty?

There was but one accommodation possible: adopt Jesus as their titular head; promote him to the status of divinity; and thus make him, so to speak, sponsor for a theology that bore his name but had not the slightest regard for his teachings. This theological fabric was also known as Christianity, and passed for such for the next ten or twelve centuries. Then in the year 1538, probably, the first complete English translation of the Bible, the work of Miles Coverdale, was printed and became available to any Englishman who could read. The same thing happened in Germany and France. From that time on the common people of Europe have read and studied the Bible for themselves, have grown to depend upon it each in his own way, and have cultivated a loving familiarity with the words and personal qualities of Jesus. This rather recent experience of discovering Jesus for themselves has given the teachings of Jesus an authority that takes decided precedence over the authority of the so-called Christian theology. Right there, in

fact, is the first great bewildering discovery that ordinary Christian folk made as soon as they found the Bible in their own hands, translated into their own languages, and waiting to be read and studied at first hand, by themselves. They could not help noticing the glaring difference between the postulates and teachings of theological Christianity, and the postulates and teachings of Jesus as recorded in the first three Gospels. For example: theology starts with the postulate that man is a poor helpless creature, totally depraved and morally incompetent, who can do nothing either to improve his present condition or to deserve his future well-being; and goes on to prove to him that he must deliberately put himself into the passive mood and wait for some power not himself to come along and save him.

Jesus starts with the postulate that man is the child of God who loves him, forgives him with inexhaustible patience, and seeks his co-operation; and goes on to urge his hearers to cultivate a truer opinion of themselves, discover their own powers, rouse themselves to intelligent activity, and by their heartfelt service to God earn their own salvation.

For several centuries Christian people have tried to reconcile these two systems—the theology and the discipleship—in their own minds, dutifully professing belief in the theology, but ordering their actual living and conduct by the discipleship. But we have by this time reached a point where millions of young people, educated, thoughtful and sincere, are beginning to ask themselves: What good does this theology do me? I cannot honestly believe a word of it, and I hate to teach it to my children. If this be Christianity I fear Christianity is not for me. I shall have to look elsewhere.

This book is addressed to whomsoever wishes to read it, but chiefly to just such young people with their growing families. It is written in the hope of persuading them that if theological Christianity fails to attract them they can still turn to the discipleship to Jesus, and find just as good a right to the term "Christian" as Jesus himself possessed.

Chapter One

THE SETTING

When the Jews looked back over their past they were impressed by one constantly recurring fact: in every moment of national danger or crisis the deliverer had appeared in the nick of time to lead them safely through the peril and on into another vista of peaceful routine life. Their history was little more than a sequence of astonishing and unpredictable deliverances. The hero for the moment had never failed: Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Jephthah, Gideon, David, Elijah, Cyrus the Persian, Nehemiah, or Judas Maccabaeus. It had happened too often to be an accident. It could mean but one thing—God was keeping his eye upon them, to preserve them intact, His favored nation, His Chosen People; and for some special purpose of his own.

It was logical and natural that they should reach a great conclusion: God had revealed to them, through their prophets, His Sacred Law. It was absurd to think that God would be satisfied with just their obedience to that Law. Being God of all the earth and every nation on earth, He would be satisfied with nothing short of world-wide obedience to that Law. This thought might have put them into an embarrassing position. They were guardians of a Law that demanded world-wide currency and world-wide obedience. But how were they to give world-wide currency to that Law? There was but one way: what God had repeatedly done He would do again. He would send another Messiah, the greatest of them all, to lead them in a victorious campaign against Rome. Since Rome had already done the drudgery of gathering up the entire known world into a single

political unit, it would be necessary only to overcome and supplant Rome, and world-dominion would be theirs. It was a wild idea but exactly to their taste; and it spread like a forest fire. The time was ripe. The Messiah is at hand. He may be among us, incognito, this very moment.

This is the general context in which Jesus of Nazareth is first introduced into the picture. The "people being in expectation," and "musing in their hearts," not only of John the Baptist but of any man conspicuous for skill or eloquence or weight of personality, "if haply he were the Christ." In addition, John the Baptist, from his Nazarite monastery, was preaching his warning to the multitudes who swarmed daily from all over the little country to hear him at his preaching station on the banks of the Jordan.

John's words are most illuminating: "You say the time has come for the Messiah's appearance. You are right; but are you ready for him? Your Jewish blood, however blue, is not qualification enough. The Messiah will choose as his followers only those Jews who themselves are morally fit to serve him in his holy task. Are you morally fit? The Law of God cannot be effectively recommended to others by people who have not obeyed it themselves. Your first preparation therefore is to repent of your own sins, and revive your own loyalty and obedience to the Law of which you claim to be guardians. The sooner you make that personal moral preparation the better will be your chance of admission into the Messiah's fellowship."

Among those who heard John's warning message was this young man Jesus, who had come down from Galilee with a company of acquaintances for the purpose of seeing this new prophet. He was fairly carried away by John's urgent eloquence. The man was speaking the truth, and it was of the first importance that every Jew in the land should hear it. John needed helpers. A hundred Johns preaching those words of warning, urging that preparation of personal repentance, and what we would call Moral Re-armament, would not be too many. Was not this his opportunity? Why should not he him-

self undertake the task of helping John to disabuse people of their false notions and warn them of the true preparation they must make?

John had earned his title, "The Baptist," from his custom of baptizing, in the Jordan, all who agreed with him and were willing to pledge themselves to a life of penitence and moral effort. But when Jesus came forward and was baptized the little rite meant more than agreement and pledge; it meant definite commitment of his time, thought, energy and interest to the work which John was trying to do alone. That it was a moment of great importance to himself is evident from the little experience of inward exaltation which came to him as he was leaving the water. He had found his real work in life; and an inner voice told him that he had decided rightly; he had God's approval; God's own gift of pure motive and right spirit was sent down to him. He was now another voice crying: Prepare ye in the wilderness a highway for our God. It was the beginning of a career destined to change the course of human history.

As he takes his cue from John's very lips: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand," and returns to Galilee to prepare his people for the coming of their Messiah, we wish with all our hearts we had some hints from which we could form a mental picture of him. There are a very few such hints, mostly mere deductions we can draw from his words. But it is necessary in order to get his meaning and find the right spirit and emphasis in his words, to know as much as we can about his personality, his prevailing temper and disposition, whether cheerful or morose, open or secretive, whimsical or pedantic, friendly or aloof. We can well remember how as 'teen-agers we used to notice the difference, when we came to the end of the Gospel of Luke and began the first chapter of the Gospel of John; the dismay and bewilderment that we felt at the contrast between the warm, sympathetic, generous Jesus portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels, and this cold, distant, unreal, bloodless Christ depicted in the Gospel of John. One was ap-

pealing and held our attention; the other was incomprehensible and tiresome. It was impossible to believe that both gospels were talking about the same man. The longer we live the more certain we grow that they were not. Whoever wrote the Gospel of John never saw Jesus of Nazareth and felt no personal interest in him.

That experience is good evidence of the authenticity of the Synoptics. They tell us about a real man, what he really said and did, how people really reacted to him. They unconsciously but unavoidably give us a fairly distinct idea of his personality, at least its outstanding traits. What were some of these traits?

Obviously he was an intensely religious man. He could talk religion to a people among whom religion was a hackneyed subject, and put such intense conviction and jubilant faith into his words that they would drop everything and listen, and follow him to hear more. He gave the subject a freshness that made it a novelty.

Perhaps his faith was the secret of his self-organization; for he had a conspicuously powerful nature, balanced and organized, that gave an irresistible authority to his words. His human interest was deep and quick. His sympathy for sufferers was almost a passion. He hated to see affliction, or oppression, or injustice; the over-bearing strong despising and browbeating the weak and helpless filled him with angry disgust. Nothing awoke his wrath so quickly as the bully taking advantage of a little child's trust. Pity was about the only thing that could break down his self-possession and make him act impulsively. He was always at the command of anyone who needed help. He recognized no social distinctions, for all were God's children: the leper by the wayside, Blind Bartimaeus at the gate of Jericho, even Zacchaeus the publican received from him the same consideration that he gave to the daughter of Jairus who was director of the synagogue, or to the sick servant of the centurion who was not even a Jew.

His own social status was humble but perfectly respectable. But such matters had no interest for him. It was always

the soul that caught and held his attention. No man ever lived who cared so little for the things that be of the body, and so much for the things that be of the spirit. For one of his status he was remarkably well educated. Among the Jews of his day, education was hardly anything more than a thorough knowledge of the Law. This knowledge he had; his familiarity with the Old Testament surprised the elders, and when they found that he could read the rolls in the original Hebrew, which was even then a dead language, their astonishment became a matter of record.

Of his physical appearance we know nothing. He was about thirty years old. We may conjecture that his temperament was quiet and equable, that he had an air of tranquil confidence and modest self-sufficiency, that he preferred to keep his private problems to himself and find their solution by himself, that he was neither conspicuously grave nor gay. He was by no means a sombre man. He had a full share of the sense of humor, howbeit of a somewhat gentler type than that which passed for humor among his countrymen.

The love-hate emotion has always been strong among the Jews; good lovers are apt to be equally good haters. It was so with them. To the typical Jew of the time there was nothing so funny as the discomfiture of a rival or an enemy. Also, as the Hebrew scholar will tell us, the Old Testament abounds in rather farfetched plays upon words. These puns, or near-puns, seem to have pleased the Jews, but puns can seldom survive translation, and these "lowest forms of wit" are completely lost upon us. But our puns differ from theirs in one important respect. In our puns the two juxtaposed words are usually both nouns: "Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew." In their puns the juxtaposed words were usually a verb and a noun: "Let it not be spoken in Spokane." In II Samuel 1, 20, David, lamenting over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, says: "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon": and he chooses verbs for "tell" and "publish" that have a marked resemblance to the names Gath and Askelon, so that the total effect is some-

thing like this: "Never gab about it in Gath; let them ask a lot in Askelon." Not very funny, you say. Yet we have somewhat similar ways of speaking that pass for humor: "Johnny, are you doing your home-work?" "No, I'm reading about whales." "Well, do those sums or I'll whale you." When we complain that there is no humor in the Bible, we must remember they had their crude forms of wit.

However, we find nothing of this in Jesus. Other people's discomfiture whether friend or foe never amused him. Whatever near-puns he made in his native Aramaic are wholly lost to us, which is just as well. His ventures into humor are always for a serious purpose, never just for the sake of a laugh. Sometimes he could be sarcastic. The pompous young scribe (Mark 12, 32-34) who condescended to approve of his answer about the Great Commandment, needed to be taken down a peg. So Jesus quietly remarks: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." We can easily understand that "no man after that durst ask him any question."

Then there is the eleventh chapter of Matthew, the most alive chapter in all the Gospels, with its play of emotion, and its whimsical similes and expressions. How could such words and analogies have been uttered without a sense of humor? The passage begins with a visit from certain messengers sent to him by John, who in his prison had heard accounts of the popular excitement Jesus was creating in Galilee. John had a question to ask, and wanted a definite answer: "Are you the Messiah we are expecting, or must we look further?" We hope John did not realize what a tender spot he was touching by that blunt question. Jesus is not yet ready to answer. He can only lay the evidence before John and let him answer his own question: "Go and tell John the things you hear and see—sufferers are cured, demons are cast out, the poor have the good news preached to them. All this may mean that I am the Messiah. John must decide for himself." There comes a touching little ejaculation that shows the tension of his spirit: "Blessed is he whoever shall not be offended in me." That is: "I hope to

heaven I do not mislead any loyal followers into error and hardship by a wrong decision."

He is prompted to take a little review of the situation. After all, what headway is he making in his effort to help John prepare the nation for their Messiah? In a mood, almost, of petulance, half-laughing, half-scolding, he asks his questions: "What was your idea in going down to hear John? Mere curiosity? A mullein stalk waving in the breeze? A man dressed up in fine clothes? You know it was not that. You went down in all good faith to hear a genuine prophet who had a true message for you, which you wanted to hear, and intended to obey. But have you really done anything about that message, anything that may justify all the trouble you took in making the journey to the Jordan? You know you have not. You are just like these children playing in the market-place. They complain to their sulky play-mates: "We have piped but you will not dance. We have mourned but you will not lament. You won't play wedding; you won't play funeral; you are hard to please."

Are you grown-up men and women any different? John came to you urging your attention; but John is a Nazarite, and will neither eat flesh nor drink wine. So you have seized upon that peculiarity as an excuse to ignore him. "He hath a devil," you say; "he is pixolated; don't listen to a half-crazy crank." Then I have come to you urging your attention. I belong to no order; I have taken no vows; I eat my food and drink my wine and wear ordinary clothes. But do you listen to me any more than you did to John? You do not. You seize upon my conventionality as an excuse to ignore me. "A gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber," you say, "just like all the rest of us. There is nothing extraordinary about him. Why should we listen to him?" You are just as hard to please as the sulky children in the market-place.

Then another shift of mood comes, and in sober severity he addresses the little towns in which he has labored, warning them for their self-complacency and indifference: Chorazin, Bethsaida, even thou Capernaum, woe unto you. If the words

that have been spoken in your streets had been spoken in the Gentile towns of Tyre and Sidon they would have listened. Even Sodom for all her wickedness would have attempted a belated reform. Therefore at the Day of Judgment they shall receive more mercy than you.

Again his mood changes. After all he is doing his best to obey God's will. The serenity of his great faith takes entire possession of him; his lips form one of the four or five prayers which are recorded in the story. Things are as God would have them. His part is to love God and trust him. For only those who love God enough to qualify as his sons can really know him and understand his will; just as only God, in his perfect love, can really know and understand his true sons. The chapter ends with an appeal to his hearers which is so tender and touching and earnest that we wonder how any one can resist it. All petulance, impatience, and criticism is gone. In a spirit of genuine solicitude he speaks the immortal words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I can give what you want. Learn of me; ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is a remarkable chapter. We read it with emotions that shift in company with his, with smiles and frowns and moisture in our eyes. It was spoken by one who had the quick, active, imaginative, observant mind that means a full share of the sense of humor.

Sometimes he is ironical. The way he pokes fun at his disciples for their social ambitions, in Luke 14, 7-10, is unquestionable evidence. The only way to read the passage is with an honest laugh. To take it seriously would be to do him a grotesque injustice. And speaking of injustice, we shall do both him and ourselves a far graver injustice unless we can make due allowances for a favorite habit of his which nothing but a sense of humor can ever permit, and that is his love of hyperbole, exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. Think of Emerson: "His heart was as wide as the world." "The world will wear a path to your door." "All that nature

made thine own, floating in air or pent in stone, will rive the hills and swim the sea, and like thy shadow follow thee." Or think of Burns: "And I will love thee still, my dear, till a' the seas gang dry." Take these statements literally and they become nonsense. Take them as they were intended to be taken, instances of that legitimate figure of speech, hyperbole, and they add emphasis in a captivating, not to say a beautiful fashion to the writer's meaning. So with Jesus: "If thine eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee." "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and it shall remove." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." To take such statements literally is not only to do Jesus a great wrong, it is also to advertise our own stupid pedantry.

We must always remember that Jesus was a speaking teacher. He never wrote a book. Not a word in the Gospels came from any pen that he ever wielded. He addressed his hearers in person, face to face, *viva voce*, and talked to them impromptu, with all the freedom and verve and conviction he could command. Some of his truths were hard for their untrained minds to grasp; therefore he resorted constantly to parables to elucidate his points. Some of his convictions they found it hard to accept; but he emphasized them with an extravagance that they seldom if ever mistook. Words were not his only medium of communication; his manner, his vocal stresses, his gestures, the expression on his face, his modulations of voice, and his inflections all helped. Since these aids to communication are unprintable they are lost to us. But with sympathy and imagination, controlled by plain common sense, we can go far toward making good our loss; and can delineate, at least in its main features, the personality who travelled back to Galilee to spread John's warning, and prepare his people for the coming of their Messiah.

We should find him a strong, clean, reverent, generous

nature, a great heart, a singularly keen and active mind, a boundless sympathy and a practical solicitude, and exceedingly sensitive to spiritual values. He lived his life just as near to the heart of God as a human creature can get. His foremost aim was to do the will of his Father in Heaven. To that aim he devoted himself with a consecration that only death could defeat.

Chapter Two

HIS THOUGHT OF GOD

The moment Jesus began to address the common people he found that he must arrange his thoughts in orderly fashion to form a self-consistent body of teaching. He must word this teaching in language adapted to their comprehension. His favorite method of presentation was the parable. From the familiar scenes and events of their every-day living he chose and related those episodes, either real or fictitious, which emphasized the principles he wanted to plant in their minds. This body of teaching must now have our attention, for it is this that became known later as the Way of Jesus. It was his religion; what he believed and practiced and tried to teach to all who would listen. It was not his deliberate choice, it grew spontaneously in him.

Perhaps we shall be disappointed to find how little there is in it that can be called original. But we may as well understand at the outset that he had no thought of being original, and no desire for any such distinction. He was far too self-oblivious to seek any sort of personal credit. Whatever originality we find will be entirely unconscious and unintended. There is, to be sure, a group of paragraphs in the Sermon on the Mount each one of which begins with a phrase that seems to make the claim to originality: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you, etc." That is the language of one who knows that he is saying something novel, even startling. But on closer examination we find that in each of these cases his apparent originality does

not consist in substituting some opinion of his own for the olden time saying, but in the way he elucidates and emphasizes the spirit and intent of that olden time saying; and in the way he insists that no obedience to the law in question is complete unless it obeys the intent as well as the letter. His originality lay in his complete lack of literal formalism.

He understood the Scriptures better than most people. He discovered more in their words because he knew that behind every arbitrary statement or precept there was a spirit and a reason. It was that spirit and reason that he always sought. It made the Scriptures "come alive" in his own heart. His aim was to make them come alive in their hearts as well, and so give their own religion back to them, a priceless treasure of faith and spiritual insight and happy worship.

Religion has been defined in many ways. Our attention has been called to the derivation of the word: re-ligio, I tie up. When Abigail thanks David, the leader of a band of out-laws, for promising to overlook the churlishness of her husband Nabal, she pronounces this blessing over him: "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." The story is in I Samuel, 25: 29. From this it would seem that religion is: to be tied up in the bundle of life with God. Probably Jesus would agree. For God was the foremost, constituent fact underlying his religion; the foundation on which the whole structure rested. Whole-hearted belief in God was the first and greatest step in the Way of Jesus. Religion for him was to live, think, choose, and act at the nucleus of life, in the closest possible co-operation with God who is the Source and Perfect Embodiment of life.

We ask at once, How did he get into that relationship with God? It is not enough to say that he was conditioned by the religious tradition of the theocracy in which he lived. As a matter of fact, the tradition of his theocracy would not have conditioned him, if it could have had its way, to any such idea of religion, but to quite a different idea. It would have taught him

to think of God as God of the Nation, God of Israel. But a God who could not be expected to go into particulars and be the God of each individual creature in the Nation. The national organism was the lowest integral unity worthy of claiming God's attention. It would have taught him to think of himself and all others in his class as too insignificant and unworthy to receive God's personal attention. Just as a farmer looks upon his wheat field as a unit, with pride and approval, but is wholly indifferent to the good or bad estate of an individual stalk here or there, so God looked upon his Nation with loving solicitude, My Chosen Race, My Peculiar People, My Nation of Priests, but could not be bothered to distinguish the individual members of the Nation and surround each one with the safeguards of his Providence. As Tennyson says of Nature:

So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the one;

So, in the Jewish tradition, religion was a national but not a personal possession.

Jesus was not the only one to resent this relegating of religion to a more remote bracket than individualism. The Psalms, especially the later ones, are full of that touching appeal for a more personal contact with God: "Oh God, thou art *my* God, let *my* cry come before thee. Consider *my* distress, and deliver *me*. Hold not thy peace at *my* tears." So with Jesus, a God of the Nation who might once in a while turn his attention to a king or to a prophet like Jeremiah, as being worthy of personal attention, but not to a fisherman, or a shepherd, or a carpenter, was not at all a satisfying concept. He demanded something closer and dearer. To him religion was nothing if not a personal matter.

We are thrown back to our question: How did Jesus find his way into his personal relationship to God? Many readers of the New Testament have been perplexed by two or three sayings of Jesus that refer to family relationships. A certain man offers to follow him; but "Lord, suffer me first to go and

bury my father." Jesus replies: "Let the dead bury their dead." Another makes the same offer; but "Let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Jesus replies: "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." These replies seem to indicate in him a certain carelessness to family ties, as though such things were of small moment to him. That indication gains weight when we recall a few other sayings: "He that loveth father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." He seems to consider family love of rather low quality, and wants a better kind of love for himself. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." This quotation from Micah must have answered to something in his own experience. Teaching one day in a throng that crowded the house, word was conveyed to him that his mother and brethren were standing without, desiring to speak to him. Did they feel that he was bringing them an unpleasant notoriety, and had they come to take him away as though embarrassed by the actions of their somewhat peculiar son and brother? His reply makes us feel that this was exactly the case, for he virtually repudiates the relationship: "Who are my mother and my brethren?" Not these people, but "they who do the will of my Father in Heaven."

From these sayings we get the hint that Jesus had never been happy in his family life. Although it is nine-tenths guesswork, we feel encouraged to sketch a picture of the situation. The legends agree in their insistence that he was the first-born child of his mother. Yet it is evident that he had four brothers and some sisters older than himself. After a visit to his own country, Nazareth, the astonished elders of the town ask: "Who is this man, and whence hath he this wisdom and power? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas, and his sisters, are they not with us?" In other words, they identify him through his brothers and sisters, who were better known because they were older than he. The only way in which he could be the first-born son of his mother and still have brothers

and sisters older than himself is that his mother was Joseph's second wife, whose only son was the youngest member in a sizable family of older half-brothers and sisters. Such a position is not infrequently an uncomfortable one. The fraternal relationship is only at half strength; and to keep up the appearance of family solidarity when personal antipathies forbid it is difficult, and the household atmosphere is tense. The older brothers and sisters were practical and extrovert. Jesus was thoughtful, unassuming, and amply supplied with resources within himself. What common ground could there be between them and this strange, silent little half-brother rapt in his day-dreams? They looked at him with a hopeless curiosity, shrugged their shoulders, and ignored him.

But (and here we begin a speculation that is tentatively guess-work) there was one exception: his father, Joseph the Just; grave, silent, and kindly; so much older than he that the difference in years ceased to be a barrier between them. The only relationship possible was the father-son relationship; and it was both purified and accentuated as it often is between an elderly father and his youngest child. Since in Jewish families the son was expected to go into his father's craft, there was ample opportunity to develop this bond to its full beauty and strength. The long hours which the two spent together at their daily work, the boy eager to share his ideas and ask his questions and suggest his speculations, and finding, to his intense gratitude, that his father could be depended on always to listen sympathetically, always to take him seriously, never to lose patience, and never to evade, or resort to that "you're-just-a-little-boy" banter, which to most little boys is a dash of cold water in the face—it is mere fancy, but wholly plausible and singularly beautiful. We can easily imagine how deep and strong the bond became; and what precious connotations gathered about that word "father" for Jesus. "No man knoweth the son but the father; neither knoweth any man the father save the son"—might there be something reminiscent about the words? It is not an idle question.

We are not told, but may safely infer from the fact that Joseph never appears upon the scene of his active ministry, that Jesus lost his beloved father at some time between the ages of twelve and thirty, that tantalizing interval of complete silence in the narrative. The loss came at a time when he was most susceptible to impressions, and most retentive of memories. All that he had needed and craved as a growing boy had been abundantly given him by just one member of his family, his old father—love and pride and understanding and complete sympathy—and an intimacy had grown up that was heightened by contrast to the indifference of all the other members. Thus the word “father” had become for him a synonym for the most precious things in life. When it came time for him to formulate his concept of God these memories of his earthly father came inevitably to his assistance. We know from his own words that his favorite form of argument was the “*a fortiori*”; “If it be so with man, how much more so with God.” “The servant is not greater than his lord, nor the creature than his Creator.” “If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give good things to them that ask him!” God must be at least as good a father to his children as Joseph had been to him, for it was impossible for Joseph to excel God. And if the word “father” could mean such love and pride and understanding and intimacy in an earthly father-son relationship, how much more must it mean love and pride and forgiveness and intimacy in the God-man relationship. Obviously, the term Father was the right term to apply to God; and the right way to think of God was Father in Heaven, whose treatment to his creatures could not be in any way inferior to the best treatment that the best of human fathers accorded to their earthly children. Jesus learned his concept of God through a conspicuously happy experience with his father Joseph. After all, Joseph as a created being must reflect a divine prototype. Therefore, to Jesus, God was Joseph magnified and sublimated.

However this may be, there is no surmise about the con-

cept of God Jesus formed; if not in this way then in some other. God was the Eternal Oneness, Beginning and End, from whom all things come, to whom all things return. He is the sum-total of all the good, virtue, grace, excellence, righteousness, power, and beauty to be found in his creation; and how much more than that no man can say. No worthy or desirable quality in any human being could be denied to God. If men could possess mercy, patience, forbearance, generosity, self-sacrifice, and untiring forgiveness God must at least equal them. If men could boast capacities too wonderful to even try to explain—intelligence, purpose, foresight, self-respect, personality, consciousness of self, and self-direction, God possessed them in at least equal measure. The disciple is not above his master. So, his favorite name for God was "Our Father in Heaven." His favorite way of thinking of God was in terms of personality. Nowhere do we find any suggestion that this Divine Personality was embodied in a physical frame, or that Jesus thought of him as having anything corresponding to a body. To Jesus the body was a thing of very secondary importance. For him, as for all Jews, reality did not depend on visibility, or tangibility, or any form of sense-perception. They would have been quite prepared to say with Francis Thompson:

O God invisible, we view thee;
O God intangible, we touch thee;
O God unknowable, we know thee;
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.

Jesus had this ability to conceive of a reality that can exist and operate entirely beyond the reach of sense-perception, and still be as real as a block of granite. Modern Science is teaching us the same ability; and it is high time.

But what especially interests us now is the relationship that came into being between Jesus and this invincible, intangible, inapprehensible God. As we have seen, it was a bond of companionship so warm, vivid, and intimate that to think of Jesus without thinking of his Father in Heaven is impossible.

For most of us the thought of God is a thought held in reserve, a second line of defence, a strong habitation whereunto we may at once resort when danger interrupts the normal routine of life. Few of us can deny the statement: the thought of God is to us a sort of bomb-proof shelter to be used in emergency. We do not live in it; to tell the truth we find it rather cramped and uncomfortable. But we are glad enough to crowd into it when the air-raid warning sounds its terrifying tocsin.

With Jesus it was just the other way round: God was never an afterthought; never a last resort to be suddenly remembered in moments of danger; and never an interruption in the routine of life. God was his constant and foremost thought; his normal routine of life. It was the world that did the interrupting. This bond of intimacy with his Father in Heaven was the condition of his well-being, as necessary to him as the water is to the trout, or as the atmosphere we breathe is to us. His first concern was to keep himself worthy of that bond; always to be a true son in whom his Heavenly Father could be well pleased. His greatest fear was that in a moment of weakness or panic, he might do something to disappoint God's confidence and forfeit his proud approval. That was an unendurable thought.

Perhaps this is not so hard to understand as it sounds. Perhaps it is only his way of doing something that we are all trying to do in slightly different fashion. That little crustacean called the limpet must cling to a rock or perish. So it is with the human spirit. No normal human spirit is exempt from the need of something greater and more permanent than self to cling to, or live in, or be a part of. In his little poem, "Each and All," Emerson reminds us that "Each" must have his "All" to belong to, whatever it may be. For the angelic maiden, her bevy of lovely companions; for the sea shell, the gleaming sands. So straight through life: for the GI, his outfit; for the British Tommy, his crowd; for the sailor, his ship's company; for the monk, his convent; for the medieval baron, his castle; for Josiah Royce, his Beloved Community; for the Athenian, his

blest city of Cecrops; and for King Arthur, his Round Table.

Furthermore, the more vital and healthy a spirit is, the more insistent his demand that this "all" shall be a great deal more than just a refuge and a protection; it must be for him the Whole of Things, a positive, ever-functioning, and purposeful enterprise; the biggest bite of life that he can chew; and that he must know everything that is happening in it; and help to reach every decision and to frame every policy; and live at its very storm-center, in its thick of things; and boast with Aeneas, "*quorum magna pars fui.*" This instinct of self-attachment to something bigger than self, and of the fullest possible participation in its activities as a necessary, respected, and beloved member, cannot be denied to so vigorous a spirit as Jesus. As a growing boy, his father Joseph had been his "All," his little Whole of Things. When Joseph dropped out, and he was left facing a dreary desert of detachment and loneliness, unable to discover anything that he could "do with his solitariness," as Whitehead would say, there must have been for him a period of despair, during which he must have made his acquaintance with "the Outer Darkness" and learned for himself what a terrifying place it is. It may explain the certainty with which he speaks of its "weeping and gnashing of teeth." All we know is that he emerged by the single escape left. He transferred his self-attachment from his father on earth to his Father in Heaven, and made that thought of God his Whole of Things. There he spends the remainder of his life, living with all his might, needed, approved, and loved, at the "secret Source of every precious thing." We can see that his bond of intimacy with God was nothing abnormal, but only his way of obeying an instinct common to humanity. Our own cruder experience should help us to understand, even emulate.

Here again we can hardly claim originality for Jesus in the intensity and vividness of his God-consciousness. We are invited to recall both Elijah, the most unearthly figure among the Jewish prophets, and Jeremiah, the most lovable, and as it would seem the most like Jesus. At Caesarea-Philippi he had

asked his disciples: Whom do men say that I am? They had replied: Some say Elijah, others, Jeremiah. This significant answer shows that people recognized certain resemblances between Jesus and these two famous figures. In the case of Elijah these resemblances were striking. Both were preoccupied with the thought of God. Both did their work solely under God's direction, without human aid or counsel. And both were tremendously efficacious, typical cases of our oft-quoted formula: "One with God is a majority"—an irresistible majority at that.

In the case of Jeremiah the same is true. Both were God's men, instruments through whom God worked, instruments that in God's hand were invincible; but without him, lost and helpless. Both insisted and taught that the only place for religion was neither synagogue nor temple, but the heart of the individual. It was with reason that men should say, some of them, that Jesus was Elijah come to life again, and others, Jeremiah.

Yet, while Jesus might not have been original in his thought of God, he was novel. Especially in his times, his teaching of God as an intimate presence in the heart was something fresh and striking, and in sharp contrast to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. A first-hand acquaintance with Deity was something of which the common people were assumed to be incapable. Enough that they were members of God's nation. They must be satisfied with such crumbs of God's attention as might sift down to them from the tables of the enlightened. Spiritually, they were minors; they needed an intermediary to recommend them to God, and to interpret God, as much of God as they could understand, to them. This attitude filled Jesus with hot indignation. The lilies of the field needed no intermediary; the fowls of the air needed no intermediary. A little child, in his simple trust and dependence was nearer to God's heart than the wisest of their rabbis. Therefore, whatever else you do, turn and become as little children. It became one of his first objectives to give their God back to them; to restore to them their natural birthright, a first-hand, unmediated relationship to their Heavenly Father. When we remem-

ber how often it has happened in history that some upper class in a community has pretended to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and has therefore claimed a monopoly on religious wisdom, and has set itself up as the indispensable bottleneck through which alone the common people may acquire their place in God's attention; and when we remember how meekly just that situation was accepted in Palestine at the time of Jesus, we can understand the fear and hatred which Jesus awakened in Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, priests, and rabbis.

The thought of God is the most private of a man's private possessions. It is something we seldom speak of; never boast of; never quarrel over, if we can help it. Perhaps we realize that nobody can exactly agree with us. For in his thought of God a man betrays his innermost being, the very formula on which his individuality is compounded. Since individualities, like autumn leaves, are never exactly duplicated, it follows that there are as many thoughts of God as there are individual souls to form them. If we quarrelled over them there would be little peace in this world. A man's thought of God is eternally, and in each case, a solecism.

Remembering this, we must be careful how we say that Jesus tried his best to share with others his own special concept of God. We nowhere find such a desire explicitly stated. He often mentions God, but always as a being whose reality is of course not in question. He urges them to love God with all their heart and soul and mind, as the first commandment in their Law bids them do. He charges them to discover in God every right quality that they can discover in the best of men, chiefly the fatherly qualities: patience, understanding, forgiveness, and an indestructible love, with its watchful care for them all, good and bad alike. He teaches them, at least by implication, that God has a purpose, a Kingdom of Heaven to establish on earth; and is waiting for them to undertake this enterprise with him as his junior partners: Son, go work today in my vineyard. He speaks of God as My Father in Heaven; but he is very definite that the relationship is not exclusive.

He nowhere tells them that he is the "only begotten Son of God." They are his sons as well as he. "Your Father in Heaven" is as frequent as "My Father in Heaven." Apart from these specifications, he leaves the field open to each one, to conceive of God, and his personal relations with God in ways most congenial to each one. His desire seems to be to instigate each one of them to some sort of original, authentic spiritual adventure. If such an adventure should culminate in a bond of personal union with God similar to his own, we may be sure that he would have rejoiced as much as the man himself.

The attempt to recapture the Way of Jesus has a strong fascination for the New Testament scholar; but for the ordinary Christian its only justification is the help it may give him in cultivating his own religious life. A rediscovery of religion, or at least a reformation of the religion we have inherited from our past, seems clearly indicated just now. The first function of religion is to meet squarely the problems, needs, and deficiencies that man discovers either in himself or in his circumstances; and since man is ever prone to think of God as Perfection, possessed of all wisdom and power, in whom are the qualities that can solve every problem and supply every deficiency, it becomes the first function of religion to acquaint man with God. As someone has said: God is the missing part of us. But man is constantly growing, building himself more stately mansions, outgrowing old deficiencies and discovering new, traversing old regions of experience and venturing into "fresh woods and pastures new." Inevitably his appraisal of himself undergoes corresponding revisions. He likes to think that his ideals are constantly becoming brighter and larger, his powers greater, and his self-exactions more austere. This process of change for the better must have its effect on man's religion if that religion is to keep itself abreast of man, closely geared to his present estate, and instantly sympathetic to his present needs. As our hymn has it, religion must be ever ready to supply man with "new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven," or it is bound to fail in its foremost function.

If we could place side by side for comparison a typical man of the Apostolic Age, and a typical man of this modern age, of course both chosen from about the same social and intellectual level, we should find some striking differences between them. Apostolic Man would confess himself unable to cope with the forces that determine his life, even if he could understand what and where they are, which he cannot. He is the helpless victim of circumstance, fate, chance, the whim of the Gods, or the tyranny of his sovereign; a "strange, piteous, futile thing," whose only hope is to survive this unmanageable life as best he can, and meanwhile learn the mysterious secret, magic formula, or fortunate affiliation that will assure him an entrance into the life of exultant redress that awaits him in the next chapter of his existence. His attitude towards life is one of long-suffering despair. This world is a hopeless proposition, a place of wrath and tears, full of unavoidable tribulation, and frankly he is afraid of it.

Modern man, on the other hand, whom Dr. Jung defines as "Conscious Man," — that is, the man who is momentarily aware of the entire complex of forces, past, present, and future, that have made and are making his life what it is — would at once affirm that this is a good world, capable of great improvement, full of hope and promise; that the only trials that really trouble him are not those which derive from the freaks of nature, but those which derive from the realm of human relations; that man himself is accountable for virtually all the wrong and suffering in this world; and that man himself is the only agency that can rectify those wrongs, prevent them in the future, and make this world the fully habitable place that it was meant to be.

Furthermore, Modern Man is fearless, well-informed, and ready for responsibility, which he believes he can meet. He is self-reliant and self-respecting. His point of view is less parochial with every generation, and more cosmic. He is genuinely hopeful, and in a quiet way enthusiastic for life and its opportunities.

With him in mind, we find ourselves asking two questions:

1) Do we find, in the Apostolic Age, any religion of the type that might correspond to the cultural status of that Age? Emphatically, we do; all the religions of the time were of that escapist-redemptionist type, which says: Waste no time trying to better this life. It cannot be done. We are but pilgrims here; heaven is our home. Therefore shut your eyes, grit your teeth and just hang on. He that endureth to the end shall conquer. Meanwhile, if you will take pains to learn the bits of esoteric knowledge that I can teach you, you will enter a happier life when this ordeal is ended.

Brahminism and Buddhism were perfect examples of this type of religion. For the poorer people there were the dozens of Mysteries. For the educated there were the Gnostic cults, so popular that even Philo the Jewish philosopher tried to accommodate his Jewish religion to the Gnostic pattern. Mr. Gilbert Murray has shown in his "Five Stages of Greek Religion," that both Epicureanism and Stoicism, for all their nobility, were religions of escape.

It was inevitable that the new religious fervor awakened by Jesus of Nazareth should be taken in hand not only by Paul but by men like Clement of Alexandria and his successor Origen and submitted to the same reconditioning and accommodating process that Philo had tried on Judaism. Philo's attempt was not nearly so successful as the Christian attempt. We may gratefully admit that this accommodation was most fortunate. Christianity as a Gnostic variant, or Christianity of the Logos type, saved both itself and Western Civilization from obliteration. Although certain historians take a mischievous delight in reminding us that English Civilization took form under the auspices of a Christianity that had nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus, we can counter the implied criticism by suggesting that no other form of Christianity could have done the work.

2) Our second question is: Which of these religions of

New Testament times can answer our modern needs? The answer is obvious: not a single one of them; not even the Logos Christianity. What possible appeal can this theological fantasy of the third and fourth centuries have for Modern Man? Just recall a few of his qualities: Science, not Superstition, is his schoolmistress. She has taught him, not only to trust the Law of Cause and Result, but also how to demobilize some causes and assemble or at least encourage others, so that he can actually take a hand in preventing the results he does not want, and securing those he does. This newly discovered power gives an irresistible fascination to this earthly life. Escape from the world is the last thing he craves. The more intimately he is involved in the very thick of these earthly activities the better he likes it. And as for the life to come, he tells himself if he thinks of it at all that it is still pretty early to talk about heaven. Several more of these earth-dramas, with their discipline of reckless experimenting and learning through mistakes, will be necessary before this human creature will be fit for heavenly bliss. And even then, heaven will not be a place to which he must go; it will be wherever this disciplined, fully developed human creature is, a Kingdom of Heaven realized on whatever earth he happens to be occupying at the moment.

A Christianity of escape and redemption offers him just what he does not want. Is it then possible to find a religion that may properly be called Christianity, and that will have an appeal for Modern Man? As soon as we make enough of an acquaintance with the Way of Jesus to see it as a whole, to recognize the faith on which it is based, and the spirit that runs through it all, we begin to wonder where in all the history of man's search for God we shall find a religion better adapted to the needs of Modern Man than this religion of Jesus.

As Nature abhors a vacuum, Modern Man abhors futility. To labor all his days in vain, to spend his strength for naught and in vain, to give his best thought and effort for an end that

does not, and never will, exist fills him with a paralysing despair that exceeds anything Isaiah might have felt. Life must have a meaning, a purpose, a goal, great enough to justify all the toil and suffering, and that both can and will be reached. In his religion he must find this assurance of purpose. He will find it in the Way of Jesus.

As the slave dreads his overseer, Modern Man dreads the element of compulsion in his religion, the prevailing air of disapproval, this unrelieved mood of censoriousness. To stand all his days in the presence of a frowning God, who cannot, or will not, be pleased with anything he does, gets unendurable. He is sick to death of these endless "Thou shalt nots" with which the religion he has known in the past greets him at every turn. His own conscience is competent to warn him that some of his motives are tainted, and some of his impulses are ill-considered and hasty. He does not need to have his short-comings rubbed in. But when his conscience tells him that his intentions are wholly right, that he has chosen, at some cost, the right course of action, that his integrity has defied the temptation and is still unbroken, he would greatly appreciate some little hint of commendation from his religion, some little word of "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." That is just the point: what a blessed novelty it would be to surprise religion in an occasional mood of approbation, actually inviting him to share the joy of his Lord; actually leading him up the gentle slopes of his own modest Mount of Transfiguration, there to enjoy his own humble Moment Blest, and hear in his own hungry heart a Divine Voice whispering: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." If Modern Man could find a religion that would occasionally break the monotony of disapproval and allow him the respite of a gratified God, who loves him and is proud of him, it would make all the difference in the world. Half a dozen such experiences in his life would change the entire complexion of things. Duty and compulsion

would go. Eagerness for the privilege of life, and a spontaneous desire to do the Heavenly Father's will would come instead. He can find just such a religion in the Way of Jesus.

Many will say that the single prohibitive difficulty about adopting the Way of Jesus lies in his theism. Jesus believed in God; thought of Him as My Father in Heaven; lived with Him on terms of the most intimate dependence. The thought of God was the constituent fact in his life; and the determination to keep himself right with God was the incentive for every choice and motive and act and word.

That is all true; it is also true that when Jesus found a man with his ability to form a bond of intimacy with God he was gratified beyond words. But Jesus makes no such request of others. He nowhere says how we are to think of God. He warns us not to deny in God any power or quality we find and admire in men. The chief of these is Fatherhood. Also it is true that he answered the lawyer's question: Which is the first commandment in the Law? by quoting the Shema: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul. Saving a few such instances he is anything but dogmatic about the specific objects of a man's faith or belief or love. Jesus knew as well as we that the benefits of belief are not exhausted by the object of that belief. They are found in the mood, the temper, the spiritual posture of the believer in dozens of forms no less real for all they are so elusive and subtle. Quite apart from what he believes, one who rates as a believing man will exhibit conspicuous differences from the unbelieving man. He will be quieter, more serene, less disturbed by anxiety. He will face novel situations with more confidence, difficulties with more persistence, dangers with more courage, and sorrows with readier resignation. This will not be because he believes in the Jewish Jehovah rather than the Philistine Dagon, or in the Buddhist Gautama rather than the Persian Zoroaster. Neither Jehovah, Dagon, Gautama, nor Zoroaster will have anything to do with it. He

will be a better, more steadfast, happier man in his approach to life, in his attack upon the problem of life, because that ability to believe permeates his entire being like a chemical ingredient in his blood-stream, and makes him in every way a more formidable soldier "in the world's broad field of battle."

Exactly the same may be said with equal truth about the benefits of love. Those benefits derive not from the object loved, but from the ability to love, in and of itself, as it affects the trend and temper of the lover's daily life.

In a mood of pedantry we might complain that this is dangerous teaching. The whole value of believing or loving depends on what you believe, and whom you love. But could this objection be brought to his attention we strongly surmise that Jesus would still insist: the first step is to cultivate the spiritual powers and capacities in the heart. Those spiritual capacities have within them a sort of built-in power of discrimination. It is their nature to reach up and not down. Give them time, and they will unfailingly find their worthiest objects. The knights-errant of old never ventured forth until they had trained themselves in the skills and vested themselves in the panoply of their romantic calling. They doubted not that sooner or later they would encounter their particular objectives: the proper scoundrel to discomfit; the proper dragon to slay; the proper damsel-in-distress for them to rescue.

It would almost seem as though the first aim of Jesus was to establish an order of spiritual knight-errantry composed of men who are in themselves spiritually competent, good trees, what Isaiah calls "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," who can be depended on when the time comes to bear good fruit; to decide all specific problems with far-sighted wisdom, for the good of the whole, with generosity and self-control, and with a reverent regard to the higher interests of human living.

Such a surmise is supported by the undeniable fact that our present world contains a goodly number, no one can say how many, of precisely such men — spiritual knights-errant, who may be found in every walk of life. We consider them our mainstay for the present and our hope for the future. Ask them just what they believe, and each will give a different answer. Some will say: God; others, America; or Democracy; or the reliability of Natural Law; or Human Nature; or justice; or friendliness. In fact their answers will sound as if they preferred to be vague, cautious, undogmatic as to the definite beliefs they hold. But they all approach life in that disposition of fearless confidence and hope and generosity and eager co-operation which denotes that they are exactly the kind of men that Jesus urges all of us to be. They are spiritually mature and competent. Their faith is not waiting to be awakened by some sign, which only an evil and adulterous generation would seek, but is an active and full-fledged power in their hearts ready to seize upon the elemental wonder and promise of human life and make it the holy adventure worthy of their self-consecration and devoted service.

Therefore what sense is there in the claim that the theism of Jesus prevents our adoption of the Way of Jesus, when right here before our eyes, and perhaps including ourselves, are the millions of Modern Men who have already done exactly what Jesus asks of his disciples? The Way of Jesus can either be our religion today, or the nucleus about which our religion may be constructed. We must understand and take care not to do him an injustice. Too often we make our querulous complaint: Good Master, please be more specific. What shall we seek or ask? In what shall we have faith? What shall we fear not, or believe, or give, or love much? He seems to answer: I cannot be explicit. I will not presume to appraise for you every detail of your experience, or dictate every reaction. My only desire is to help you cultivate your own spiritual powers so that you can live your lives yourselves. Therefore, make

yourselves men of vision, idealism, faith, courage, confidence, generosity and friendliness to all your fellow-men. Then you will be prepared for each definite occasion when it arises; and the specific predicates for your verbs will come into sharper focus as the years pass.

Jesus is right. Each one must walk on his own feet. Individuality will brook no interference. All Jesus can do is to help us find a way. It was inevitable that he should recommend the way that seemed so rich and true in his own case, and brought him out on so bright a summit. The twenty-fifth stanza of "The Song of the King" by Laotsu, the Old Philosopher of China, begins with a line that haunts the memory:

"Something there is, inherent and natural,
Which existed before heaven and earth."

That is about all Modern Man will consent to say — Something there is. Any one can say that, and many do. We can begin with faith in that Something, and go on from there. Jesus was not in a hurry; there is plenty of time; the years will pass along; the intellectual pride and scientific scrupulosity of manhood in its prime and vigor will give place to the tranquil humility of old age; "Something there is" will gradually take on form and definition. Then the emptiness will become a presence; the doubt will turn into a prayer; and the silence will become a voice: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

An afterthought: In the fortieth chapter of Isaiah the author asks a very old question: To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? What mental picture may we properly form when we try to conceive of God? It would help most of us, especially young people, if we could find a satisfactory answer to that question.

Many answers have been suggested. God is the cleansing fire, or the life-giving sun, or the quickening rain. These

answers all savor of the Old Nature Worship. God is Power; God is Justice; God is Purpose; God is Wisdom; God is Love. These merely replace a formless abstraction with other abstractions equally formless. Here is a way to think of him that has helped some people.

We say everything must begin with God; we also say everything must begin as a thought. Both sayings are right, for God is Thought; the Creative Intelligence; the Primal Thinker; the Fulness of Mind, thinking his thoughts and casting them forth into the void till all space is full of them. Very well, you say, but what next? How do God's thoughts become galaxies, and solar systems, and habitable planets, and life in its myriad forms and achievements? We do not know. But we do know that a wonderful process of metabolism is going on about us all the time, in every tree and flower and living body of man or beast, by which the most ephemeral properties in earth and air and sunlight are being solidified into the matter of woody fibre and body tissue. Hence we are prepared to agree that the same process, or one like it, is constantly solidifying the thoughts of God into the material forms he designs for them. Amiel tells us that action is but coarsened mind; and Bergson ventures the suggestion that matter is spirit run down.

It is more to the point to consider how God conceived as the Primal Thinker meets all requirements. Thought reaches farthest and nearest; there is nothing so powerful as an idea; thought can be everywhere simultaneously, interpenetrate the densest substance, saturate Spinoza the God-saturated man, and every single one of his billions of companions in life, and still be unexhausted to roam unpeopled deserts, lonely mountain tops, every dark unfathomed cave of the Seven Seas, and cause it to rain in the wilderness where no man is; thought can fashion itself as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, honor and wit, courage and daring, pity and mercy, justice and reason, the skill of Caesar, the wisdom of Plato, the Art

of Shakespeare, the Love of Jesus. No spiritual grace is beyond its reach.

This means that our Thinker-God is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent with attention concentrated at every point every moment; an Indwelling Presence whose temples we are, and at the same time a Wholly Otherness entirely objective to us. He assumes the vesture of personality, and also remains an austere uncompromising Principle. He is love and justice and purpose, and also compassion and comradeship. And withal he is self-conscious, self-integrated, and self-consistent, both definite and infinite, beyond the path of sun and star, and yet beside me here. Every divine quality is in him: Path, Motive, Guide, Original, and End.

The suggestion is offered for what it may be worth: God is the Primal Mind, whose thoughts create and sustain this Whole of Things. How precious are thy thoughts unto me O God, how great is the sum of them. If I should count them they are more in number than the sand.

Chapter Three

HIS HUMAN INTEREST

Jesus carried in his heart a causative agency of the first magnitude, the results of which could not be frustrated or ignored: his love for God. At first it filled him with a tumult of happiness, colored all his actions with a rosy light, and bathed all his landscape with a radiance so lustrous that he marvelled that others could not see it as clearly as he. Then it began to speak to him in soberer tones: See here, if you love God so intensely you must validate your love by making yourself worthy to love him, and worthy of his answering love. The obvious way to do this is by loving what He loves, wanting what He wants, and hoping as He hopes. A life lived in perfect sympathy with Him, reflecting His affections, purposes and methods is clearly indicated for you. Anything short of such a life will mean that your love is not genuine.

A lover of God must love what God loves; and here is his first and most urgent opportunity: humanity, poor, deluded, folly-ridden, sinning, suffering humanity, his fellow-men, God's children. God created them and the unavoidable presumption is that God loves them. Could he also love them? He must, or else his love for God is a sham. That is how it might look to us. Fortunately for Jesus, the task was not so difficult. As we have seen, he was a natural-born lover of mankind. His human interest was great and active. His sympathy amounted to a passion. At that point this particular duty jumped with his inclination; and the duty element in his love for man was reduced to the vanishing point.

To the poorer people, handicapped and forgotten, publicans and sinners, maimed, halt, and blind, his heart went out with special readiness. He was champion of the oppressed and unfortunate. Their welfare was dearer to him than his own. But these were simply the first to receive an affection that was free to all. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"; he meant every word.

Jesus, then, sets before us the one teaching of his that was to receive from him a more wide-reaching and permanent emphasis than any other teacher had been able to give it. We cannot say the idea originated with him. The Golden Rule, at least in its negative form, is to be found in the fifteenth book of the *Analects of Confucius*, who had been dead five hundred years before Jesus proclaimed it. But whereas the Golden Rule was still-born in the *Analects*, it comes to life and vigor in the Way of Jesus. The world at the time of Confucius was no more ready for the idea that all souls are equal in God's love than the world at the time of Eric the Red was ready for a Western hemisphere. Jesus was more fortunate than Confucius in living at the very time when thinking men were taking up the subject of human individuality, what it is and what it implies. In this speculation Jesus may not have been the most learned, but he was the most effective voice.

We have already noted in the preceding chapter that the Jews thought of their God as primarily God of the Nation. Religion with them was more a national than a personal relationship. The ultimate man came in for his share of the divine attention by virtue of being a member of the nation. He was supposed to receive all the benefits that he might need from the official acts of worship performed in his behalf every day, when the morning and evening sacrifices were offered on the great altar of burnt offerings in the inner court of the Temple. In these sacrifices and prayers, as in the various annual feasts, the nation as a unit worshipped God through

its appointed officers, and the benefits of that worship were supposed to filter down through the population, so that each individual got his share.

We can, however, find long-standing elements in Jewish religion which seem to resent this "collective" worship and clearly recognize a personal relationship between God and the solitary soul. The rites of purification after child-birth, or after a cure from leprosy, or the trespass- and thank-offerings were made by individuals in return for personal recovery or forgiveness. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift; first go and be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift." That is personal worship. We find the same hints in many of the Psalms, especially the post-exilic. There is our beloved Twenty-third Psalm with its pronouns in the first person, singular.

So it was with Jesus. To him the soul of man was too wonderful a mystery to be relegated to a second-hand relationship with the Father of Souls. To Jesus religion was nothing if not a personal matter. Nowhere is his teaching so emphatic. He seems to say in words we can almost hear: You may think that God looks on our nation as we look on a flock of sparrows. There are plenty of them. If a dozen or so fall to the ground or into the fowler's net and are sold in the market-place two for a farthing what of it? They will never be missed. But you are wrong. Not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. Or you may think that God sees his nation only in the mass, as you see a head of hair. And if some of the hairs get pulled out what difference can it make? There are plenty left. But not so. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. So "When thou prayest enter thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." It was Jesus' duty, everybody's duty, to treat each soul as if it were as dear to the heart of God as his own; to respect his dignity, honor his

rights, and treat him in all ways with the same friendliness and justice that one expects for himself.

But people will say: How can I love everybody as I love my close friends? I cannot deny the natural affinities that draw me to some and repel me from others. How can I say that I love a man when I really dislike him and hope never to see him again? True; we cannot explain these affinities. Why Louis XI and his barber were such close friends is a mystery; or why most of us have a limited capacity for intimate friendships. The ordinary college boy can form from thirty-five to fifty close friendships. Three or four of his class-mates are capable of knowing and liking every one in the class. The rare man, like Will Rogers, can say that he has known thousands of men but has never met one whom he did not like. We can neither deny nor ignore these elusive forces that govern our likes and dislikes. Must we say then that the Second Great Commandment is only for Will Rogers and the few like him who have the gift for universal friendships?

That would be to read the wrong meaning into the word "love." There perhaps is just where our difficulty lies: we do not know just how to translate that word "love." There are at least three phrases familiar to all which convey exactly the meaning of the Second Great Commandment. First, "Platonic love," meaning philosophical love, or love as a philosophical principle, a basic dispassionate good-will. Second, Kant's Categorical Imperative in one of its forms, perhaps the noblest form that he gave it: "Thou shalt treat others, never as merely means to thine end, but always in each case as ends in themselves." And third, a bit of slang too expressive and precise to be over-looked: "Treat people white." To love in any one of those three ways is to fulfill the Second Great Commandment.

In the times of Jesus the Second Commandment was far more of a novelty than it is now. It was even revolutionary. It speaks well for the clarity of his thought that he gave this

commandment so prominent a place in his Way. It is as though an intuition warned him that until the class distinctions of his age were tempered with understanding, justice, and sympathy the world was not going to make any appreciable headway toward the Kingdom of God. How was he to ameliorate those distinctions? He himself made but one distinction: those who loved God better than anything else, and those who loved something else better than God. We run into it repeatedly in the course of his teachings: Those who seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and those who are glad "like the low-loving herd of self in other still preferred"; those who are "rich toward God," and those who find their wealth "in the abundance of the things that they possess"; those who "lay up for themselves treasure in heaven," and those who "lay up for themselves treasure on earth"; those who "rejoice when they are persecuted for righteousness' sake," and those who prefer to "gain the whole world" even though it means losing their own souls. When he found, here and there, such people of his own type his heart went out to them. But how was he to increase their number?

There is another word in the Commandment that needs to be more accurately defined: "neighbor." To the Jew every other Jew was a neighbor; and the Second Commandment really meant "Thou shalt love thy fellow-Jew as thyself." But their own prophet Isaiah had taught them that their national God Jehovah was the sole supreme divine ruler of the entire universe and all creatures in it; that any man, anywhere, who worshipped God by any name was in reality worshipping their Jehovah, and must be rated as their fellow-worshipper of Jehovah, their neighbor, to be treated as such.

There can be no doubt that Jesus not only saw this new connotation in the word neighbor, but insisted that all should see it. So when a man asked: O yes, the Law commands me to love my neighbor, but who is my neighbor? Jesus had his

answer ready: Your neighbor is any man within reach of your love; and your own Law commands you to love him, whatever his race, color, or creed.

This rubbed them the wrong way. Frankly, those Jews of ancient times enjoyed such luxuries as class-prejudice, racial pride, a haughty over-bearing demeanor to all inferiors, hatred for all Romans and Samaritans, contempt for all publicans and sinners, and a self-righteous ostentation. And when this troublesome demagogue, Jesus of Nazareth, openly declared by an argument they could not refute that their own sacred Law categorically commanded them to love their neighbor and that, thanks to their own prophet Isaiah, the term neighbor included all men, even despised Samaritans, he was taking a lot of the joy out of life for them.

We get a notion of his method of spreading his gospel of human brotherhood. First, by words, urgent words that sprang from passionate conviction. Then, even more efficacious than his words, there was his personal example. He practised what he preached long before he preached it. His was one of those strong honest natures that can communicate its friendship and solicitude telepathically. Even at this distance we are impressed by the way all sorts and conditions of mankind were drawn to him by the magnetism of his sincerity: centurion, ruler of the synagogue, rich young man, leper, Blind Bartimaeus, publicans, Canaanitish woman, even an occasional Pharisee like Simon. To everybody he was far more than the theory of human brotherhood; he was the fact. His own heartfelt love for mankind was his best argument.

Furthermore, we can get a fairly accurate notion of just what Jesus and his disciples were trying to do by recalling the mood which comes over us every Advent season, with Christmas close at hand — a mood of self-forgetfulness, and kindness, and solicitude and trust—as though we were trying to get ready for Christmas. We have only to lift a typical Christmas season out of our modern life and set it down in their

life in Northern Palestine, two thousand years ago, to get an excellent suggestion of their objective in preparing their country for the coming of their Messiah. They met their obstacles, chief of which was Jewish patriotism. Now patriotism with most races is based on simple affection. The patriot freely acknowledges the faults of his country, but with all her faults he loves her still. Among the Jews patriotism had this basis in affection, a passionate affection too; but its more conspicuous basis was the sense of superiority. They were God's Chosen People, and of course far superior to all other races. Jesus found that feeling of superiority his first and most awkward barrier. Why should they love their fellow-men as themselves when their fellow-men were not as themselves but far beneath them?

How well then did Jesus and his disciples succeed? For the moment, their success was not sufficient to avert the final tragedy of the cross. The old ideas of an invincible Messiah, a son of David, endowed with superhuman skill and prowess, had taken deep root in their hearts. We have the testimony of poor Stephen that they were a "stiff-necked generation, uncircumcised in heart and ears." Humble people like Jesus and his disciples were too few and insignificant to overcome such a handicap.

But taking a long range view of the matter, no one can deny that they did succeed. Christianity did survive; it grew and spread until it dominated the Roman Empire. It dissipated the peril of the Barbarian invasion by absorbing the barbarians as fast as they invaded. It was the solitary star of guidance and hope throughout the confusion of the Dark Ages. It supplied the incentive for the Crusades, and for the Revival of learning. And by its unyielding insistence that before God all human souls stand on a footing of equality, it planted the seed of the democratic ideal. According to Lord Bryce, the two Great Commandments, which are the gist of the teaching of Jesus, confront every democracy as the con-

dition which must be met if that democracy is to endure. No citizen of our country can afford to forget his words:

"It is an old saying that monarchies live by honor and republics by virtue. The more democratic republics become, the more the masses grow conscious of their own power, the more do they need to live, not only by patriotism, but by reverence and self-control, and the more essential to their well-being are those sources whence reverence and self-control flow."

But reverence is the ability to recognize with awe the presence of the Absolute, the ability to love God. And self-control is the ability to put self in its proper place, and keep it there—the ability to "love thy neighbor as thyself," by granting to him all the rights, prerogatives and freedom of opportunity that we claim for ourselves. Our democracy can endure on but one foundation: love to God and love to man, the essence of the Way of Jesus.

The history of Western Civilization is virtually the history of Christianity. Remembering that modern democracies, the proudest achievement of Western Civilization, are conditioned by their obedience to his Two Great Commandments, Jesus has no reason to complain of his lack of success. It has taken a long time to reveal itself; for the success that Jesus would want must be an in-built, in-bred granulation of spiritual tissue too gradual to be perceptible. Twenty centuries may see its beginning; two hundred centuries may see its adolescence. We are still in process of that gradual, bred-in-the-bone conversion to the Way of Jesus. We cry out in fits of despair: How long, O Lord, how long? And the Voice replies: I know neither long nor short. For me time does not exist. Time is a purely human category. I deal only with "sweet eternities." Go back to your task. Attack your next obstacle, for this spiritual tissue can granulate only

through its exercise against obstacles. You will find there is plenty of the commodity you call "time."

And truly there are enough "next obstacles" to attack to engage all our attention. The moment Christianity got out into the Roman world it met another obstacle to its Second Great Commandment: the masses, and the fear which the masses awakened. Even during the days of the Republic the masses as we call them heavily outnumbered the ruling class and were a constant menace to the existing order. This danger increased as the Republic gave place to the Empire, with its closer concentration of power, and with its accentuation of the cleavage between rulers and ruled. As the victorious legions filled the Empire with fresh hordes of subject people the masses grew ever more massive, and the danger of violence more menacing. The only policy the rulers could adopt was dictated by this fear of violence: to keep the common people fed, entertained, divided, and unorganized — never allow them to discover their own power. Free bread kept them fed. Gladiatorial shows entertained them. Permission to each subject kingdom to continue its national entity, under its own king as Rex Socius, and freedom to worship their own gods kept them divided. The difficulties of travel and communication with constant watchfulness kept them unorganized. In such an atmosphere what chance was there for the Christian missionary with his Second Great Commandment?

The mischief of it was that there was a chance for the Second Great Commandment, but only a partial one. Paul and his fellow-apostles carried Christianity from Syria to Spain. Naturally they gave this Christianity its distinctive qualities, mutual friendliness, helpfulness and regard, a loyalty to Christ that took priority over every other loyalty; and thus, inadvertently, they turned it into a vast world-wide mutual benefit brotherhood with its secret pass-words and countersigns, its own moral code and standards of behaviour,

a stubborn, fanatic, uncompromising loyalty within a loyalty, a lump of gristle that refused to be assimilated by even so efficacious a melting pot as Rome. Thus Christianity became exactly what the rulers of Rome had most dreaded and had tried to prevent — a divisive element that not even persecutions and catacombs could suppress. Doubtless this was inevitable, and on the whole unfortunate. For the irony of it all is that in three centuries or less Rome found her sole hope of survival in the very Christianity that she had done her utmost to destroy.

Today we are still striving to acquire for ourselves and all others that instinctive built-in attitude toward our fellow-men that shall express the tenor and spirit of the Second Great Commandment. We have found our own modern obstacles, chief of which is our over-grown sense of individualism. We have never relinquished the aims and hopes that brought our "Founding Fathers" to America three centuries ago. They were "rugged individualists" with a vengeance. They came to America in search of that chance to give their individualities full play which the restrictions of Old World society denied them. America was to be their land of individual opportunity, where they could hold real estate in fee simple, build houses, establish towns, gather churches, choose ministers, make laws, administer justice, collect and spend taxes, and provide safe-guards; and do it all at the dictates of their own best judgment and desire.

They were not rebels, but victims of a circumstance which they could no longer tolerate. And after all, why should they tolerate it? They were doing no harm to any creature by their experiment in starting afresh. All they asked was to be forgotten, ignored, left alone. They saw, no one could see more clearly than they, that their communities must be what they called "bodies politick," or what we call political entities; and that a certain percentage of their time and energy must be taken from the pursuit of individual aims

and given to the maintenance and protection of their political fabrics. They were not anarchists; they were distinctly not of that class of reformers who believe the only refuge from misgovernment is no government at all. They were firm believers in government of law and order; but they also believed that a government could be devised that would be far more altruistic in its aims than any they had found in the Old World, and without prejudice to its efficiency as government. It would center about the individual and his rights. It would accommodate itself to his happiness and prosperity. It would afford him the maximum degree of individual freedom, coupled with the minimum burden of individual responsibility. They believed such a government was possible, and that it would not jeopardize its solidity just because it existed for the benefit of its own citizens and not for the glory and prestige of some monarch on a distant throne.

The whole purport of their coming to America was to find a chance of experimenting with such a government. And the whole structure of their ideal of full opportunity for individual self-development was predicated on the tacit assumption, far too tacit, that of course they would recognize, meet, and discharge all the obligations this government laid upon them. They would show the world that a government for the people could also be a government of and by the people. They would be as faithful to their citizen-responsibilities as they were eager for their individual opportunities.

At about this point we can begin to detect the first indications of that lack of balance which built itself up in the next few generations into our own foremost obstacle to the Second Great Commandment. We may even venture to give it a name: Novelty. Every craft or profession formulates in the course of time its code of ethics and etiquette that shall guard it against the malpractice that might give it a bad name, or do it a serious injury. One of the important functions of the old European guilds was to protect their crafts by devising

and enforcing just such moral codes. But these codes could not receive definite articulation until a period of novelty, with its unbridled competition, trial and error, malpractice, misdemeanor, unscrupulous action had revealed the specific rules and regulations it must enforce. Think of the way Daniel Drew and Commodore Vanderbilt treated each other's steamboats during the novelty period of their bitter rivalry for the Hudson River Passenger trade. Think of the unscrupulous device by which the cattle drovers of New York exacted higher prices for their beef cattle: — keeping them away from water until ten minutes before the buyers arrived to make their purchases, and then turning them into the watering troughs to swell themselves up, sleek and plump. Our phrase "Watered stock" is an unsavory relic of that practice.

To make a long story short, remember that our Founding Fathers were hungry for individual opportunity; then think of the overwhelming torrent of individual opportunities that burst upon their bewildered vision the moment they began to look about them for means of livelihood: fisheries of New England, endless forests of the best lumber, fur-bearing animals, the black soil of the Mississippi basin, tobacco fields of Virginia, cotton in the South, stores of precious minerals, coal, petroleum, gold on the Sacramento, sudden rises in the value of real estate, foreign trade, to mention only a few. And each opportunity was a challenge to individual energy and initiative. Also each opportunity was a novelty with its period of mistakes and malpractice that simply could not be digested and codified before the next opportunity burst on their ken. One novelty doth tread upon another's heels, so fast they come: — that was just the trouble. They were swept off their feet. They had no chance for the meditation which maintains balance. They got off on the wrong foot, with a robust gigantic idea of the value of individual opportunity, and a frail anemic idea of the value of individual responsibility, to the state and to the rights of others. And it is just that

distorted perception of values that we have not relinquished.

It is all very well to defend them: to claim that it was hardly fair in Fate to subject them to such a debauch of opportunity; to argue that American history to date has been a history of delirium, and you cannot judge a man's acts in delirium. But what right have we to defend ourselves? Now that the turmoil is apparently abating, and we can pick up the pieces, it becomes possible to identify some of the fallacies we have taken over from them.

For one thing, we are left with a greatly exaggerated sense of the importance of individuality and individual success. We are individuality-conscious, success-conscious to an almost exclusive degree. Even Emerson encourages us in this feeling. After describing little man walking about with a puzzled look among the legs of his guardians tall, who are the Lords of his Experience, he tells us that Dearest Nature, strong and kind, takes him by the hand:

Darling, never mind:

Tomorrow they will wear another face;

The master thou; these are thy race.

Doubtless he is right; only a reckless man would disagree with Emerson. But the point is that if I am to think that "I am the owner of the sphere, of the seven stars, and the solar year," and that the straining skies and trampling stars, and the groanings and travail of the whole evolutionary process must find their justification in the fact that I am at last an individual, and that the ultimate purpose of "Caesar's hand and Plato's brain and the Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain" is to aid me to my success as an individual, what chance has the Second Great Commandment with me? How much easier does it make my obedience?

For another thing, we are left with the idea that our responsibility to the commonweal, to the larger organism in which we are held together as component fragments, is

completely discharged in winning our personal success. We are assured that the best service we can render the state is to fulfill our personal ambitions in it. Dr. Samuel Johnson is quoted in support of that comforting assertion: "I have noticed that a man is never so innocently employed as when he is trying to make money." We may be too naive to detect the sarcasm in the words; but surely we can see what a premium this theory puts upon simple old-fashioned selfishness. What chance has the Second Great Commandment among a people who are encouraged to believe that in fulfilling their own selfish aims and ambitions they are doing their whole duty? Our present handsome fashion is to shout our boast that America is the Land of Opportunity, and to whisper our admission that America is also the Land of Individual Responsibility. It is no disgrace to be individually responsible. We have still to learn the truer and sweeter pride that can make both boast and admission in accents of equal volume and emphasis.

For still another thing, individual opportunity is sure to awaken violent competition; and, say what you will to the effect that industry is the life-blood in America's veins, and that competition is the soul of industry, you cannot deny that competition is an obstacle to the Second Great Commandment. You can no more raise a crop of brotherly love in the soil of competition than you can raise a crop of potatoes in a swamp. Nowhere is the need of a proper code of etiquette and ethics more evident than in this detail of our modern activity. For there is such a thing as industry for the benefit of all the parties concerned: management, labor, and consumer. And there is such a thing as mutually advantageous competition. Thousands of Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs all over the country have discovered this, and are striving to bring it to reality. More power to their elbow. But until they succeed, the spirit of modern industry, with its competition, and all the intensity of feeling and bitterness, and all the un-

principled tricks and devices that competition still connotes will remain essentially incompatible with the Second Great Commandment, and a formidable obstacle to its obedience.

There is one other great obstacle confronting us. It is not easily named. It is more active than conservatism; more vicious than stand-pattism. It is the attempt to hold up the entire progress of mankind at a spot that offers exceptional advantage to some single powerful interest. Human progress, like an accommodation train, proceeds by a series of spurts and pauses. The spurts we call "periods of transition"; the pauses we call "ages": The Homeric Age, the Alexandrian Age, the Elizabethan Age, the Victorian Age, and so on. In the experience of every nation there come these pauses when the intangible forces of that nation's life happen to fall into a pattern, or happen to set up a trembling equilibrium that offers especial advantages to some of the powerful enterprises or interests of that nation. At once we hear eager voices raised in pleading argument and cajolement: How nice this is; just what we want; a seller's market; a steady demand; a supply that can be controlled; high prices; cheap labor; unlimited raw material; no competition; huge dividends. Let us indefinitely prolong this pattern; catch this equilibrium and permanently stabilize it.

This attempt to freeze a social or an economic or even a cultural situation which they found helpful and profitable to themselves, even though it meant prolonged misery to everybody else, was just what Jesus detected in the scribes and Pharisees about him. It was the chief cause of his indignation, because it was the exact opposite to loving thy neighbor as thyself; it was treating other people wholly as means to your end, and never as ends in themselves. It was the burden of the first woe he uttered against them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Nothing

made him angrier than that predacious treatment of helpless ignorant people.

Jesus had keen powers of perception. The Gospels often speak of his ability to know other people's thoughts. For him, it was literally true that "what you are thunders so that he could not hear what you say." If he could drop in on our life today many a fair disguise would be torn to tatters. Louder than the words spoken many an unspoken motive would be thundered into his ears. From our bitter-end theologians the thundering would articulate itself into something like this: "My dear Friends: it is my sad duty to warn you of the voices of our times that are trying to lure you into the pitfalls of self-respect and self-reliance, promising you that you can work out your own salvation. I beg you to turn a deaf ear to all such; for you can never of your own efforts earn your salvation. You are original sinners, inheritors of Adam's guilt, morally incompetent, and wholly dependent on the divine scheme of salvation which our beautiful theology offers you. Always remember this, and act accordingly. For the entire success of our theology rests on the blessed institution of Total Depravity."

Again the thunderings of an American politician are quite apt to be somewhat as follows: "Fellow Citizens, you have chosen once for all the party with which you prefer to align yourselves, and you have elected me to be your representative in Congress. In doing so you have exercised your democratic right to self-government to the full. From this point on, your duty is to believe and support what your party and your representative tell you; that you know nothing about the political issues of the day; that the most despicable creature in our modern life is the man who calls himself an 'Independent Voter,' one who presumes to form his opinion afresh each election concerning his party's platform and his representative's fitness for office. You will please be docile; avoid these mistakes; and give your leaders a reliable backing.

For the whole efficiency of our two-party system depends on the blessed institution of party loyalty."

To stand in the presence of one of our successful managers of industry, is to hear still another style of thundering: "See here, you laboring men, it is your business to be poor; to live in a cold house with rent over-due; to have an overworked wife and children crying for food. See that you attend to that business. It will put you in an acquiescent mood to any job you can get, and any wage that is offered. For American industry rests on the blessed institution of cheap labor."

These examples are enough to show what is meant by stabilizing the equilibrium at the point that offers special advantages to particular interests. In the past the practice was carried to shameful extremes; and efforts have been made through legislation to check it by laws against combinations in restraint of trade; and by pure food and drugs acts. It is true that now we can buy canned foods, patent medicines, temperance drinks, in reasonable confidence that the commodities involved have not been adulterated with habit-forming drugs in the hope of creating an artificial market. But the practice still goes on in ways too insidious for the law to reach. Furthermore, even though the law forbid the practice, it does not change the wish or the intention of the heart. That still exists as rapacious and malign as ever; and that is what constitutes our greatest modern obstacle to the Second Commandment.

We have still a long distance to travel. We have made progress in that we have learned what the Second Great Commandment is, and what it requires for its obedience. Also, we have learned that beneath its seeming sentimentality, it has all the cold, relentless austerity of a theorem of Euclid. Hate is the death-dealing emotion. Love is the life-giving emotion. Combinations on a basis of mutual extermination are doomed to fail. Combinations on a basis of mutual benefit are the only ones that can succeed. It is a biological law.

As Americans, we are trying to lead the world in human interest and sympathy, in generosity, in simple every-day prosperity and happiness, and in diplomatic wisdom and justice. We can do even more. We can lead the world in our loyalty to that Way of Jesus which is nowhere so narrow, so straitened, so difficult, and so unmistakable as in his Second Great Commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Chapter Four

HIS MORAL INCENTIVE

When the 'teen ager asks the question which we gray-beards never dared to ask, a mild panic comes over father and mother. It is going to be a question for which there is no answer; or if there is, they do not know it. This is the question: What is this thing you call morality? Why should I try to be moral? Perhaps the best way to approach our subject is to set up a trial answer to each question. First: morality is that line of conduct which most nearly attains an ideal end in view. Second: you should be moral because only through morality can your ideal end in view be most nearly attained. Of course both answers are unsatisfactory; yet they may serve as spring-boards from which to jump into the middle of the subject.

Conduct is the course of action through which we seek to attain a desired result. The moral quality of conduct is determined by the moral nature of this desired result; good or bad according as its result is beneficial or harmful. Everything depends on the nature of the result we seek. Some results are chosen for us by forces beyond our control; circumstance, necessity or accident. The results that lie within our field of choice, the optional results, are therefore the only ones we need to consider. These are of a great variety, ranging all the way from the personally desirable results which we have no difficulty in choosing, to the widespreading results from whose universal benefits only we, the choosers, are excluded. Morality therefore is the ability, first, to choose the most uni-

versally beneficial result conceivable, even though we ourselves are excluded from its benefits; and, second, to follow the line of conduct which leads to its attainment.

Obviously, a strong incentive is needed for such a choice. There are several such incentives. Force of habit is a strong incentive to right choosing for those of us who have been brought up to choose only the right. Those of us who live in well advanced communities with high standards find it difficult to disappoint the expectations of our community and friends, and therefore feel the incentive of conformity. Very often we surprise ourselves by finding that in making a base choice we are offending an unsuspected expectation in ourselves, and feel at once the powerful incentive of self-respect.

Probably the strongest incentives of all are love and fear. In varying intensity the love of beauty is in us all. We agree with Euripides that beauty, when seen, is always loved. We agree with Keats that truth is beauty; and with the Psalmist that holiness is beauty. Therefore in loving beauty we are at the same time loving its companion properties, truth and holiness. There we have the noblest incentive of all to right choosing: love of the right. Such an incentive is apt to be felt only when the powers and discernments of the soul have reached full maturity; it is a grown man's incentive.

Moreover, very often this incentive of love is preceded by its exact opposite, fear. As though fear were the natural preparation for love; you must first fear what you afterwards love. The Old Testament tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And the New Testament could tell us if it would, in fact, does tell us in roundabout ways, that the love of the Lord is the consummation of wisdom. However that may be, for many centuries the Holy Bible was considered man's final and sufficient authority. It was the complete and infallible Word of God. To obey its commandments was to win God's approval and his eternal reward. To disobey was to suffer his displeasure and his

eternal punishment. Many of us older ones can remember how cogent was that incentive of fear.

Of recent years, and thanks to the heroic work of Bible Scholars, the Bible has been disenthroned from its siege perilous of final infallible authority as the very word of God, and has been re-enthroned upon the siege reasonable, intelligible, and helpful, as the record of the spiritual experience and growth of a singularly God-conscious people, the Ancient Jews. Its authors were inspired as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Lincoln, and thousands of others were inspired — in that they were the ablest of men, lifted by great emotional pressure to the very heights of their mental ability and spiritual insight. Thus it is for millions of modern readers the most intelligible, reasonable, understanding, inspiring, and interesting handbook of religion in our language. And speaking of language, it is worth remembering that about fifty percent of its religious value was added to it in the process of translation into our language. The men who did that work were in the same class with the authors: the ablest men of their times, lifted by great emotional pressure to the heights of their mental ability and spiritual insight. Our present knowledge of the circumstances under which the several books were written enables us to free the Bible as a whole of its decidedly awkward arbitrary authority and find in it the far sweeter and more efficacious authority of actual experience and sympathy. It can no longer tell us things, but it can help us tremendously to discover things for ourselves.

This change in our attitude to the Bible helps us to understand our 'teen-agers and their embarrassing questions: What is morality? Why should I strive to be moral? They represent the generation to whom the Old Testament incentive of fear has never been presented; not even as much as it should be, for the incentive is still there in the picture, ready as ever to function. They speak for the generation to whom the words: This is right because the Bible says so; this you must do be-

cause the Bible tells you to, have never been spoken. Therefore they are thrown back to the original questions, just as the authors themselves were. And they ask our help in finding answers somewhat more complimentary to their intelligence than the answers which the Old Testament writers found. And we cannot brush them off by quoting Tennyson:

Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die.

For they will come right back with their retort: Is that so? Well, get this straight. There will be neither doing nor dying until we have reasoned why.

As it happens, Jesus was also thrown back to the original questions, for he was dissatisfied with the answers the Old Testament writers gave. In the belief that the answers and the incentive he found are the answers and incentive we would like to help our children find, we can hardly do better than to follow him through his experience, and to his discovery.

Early in the Sermon on the Mount there is a sentence which tells us more about the religion of Jesus than any other sentence he ever uttered: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." It must have been somewhat upsetting to his hearers to be told that their scribes, whose only task in life was the study of the Law, and their Pharisees, whose only occupation in life was a strenuous and meticulous obedience of the Law, were not quite up to the requisite standard of righteousness to qualify for the Kingdom of Heaven. What was strong with them? What fault could Jesus find with their righteousness? And where in all the population could they find a righteousness that exceeded theirs? These are just the questions that must engage our attention.

Reading the Old Testament, we frequently come across some reference to the Covenant, God's covenant with Israel.

Perhaps it sounds to us like one of the unusual bits of terminology with which their religion abounded, and we pay little attention to it. But it deserves close attention. Fraser's "Golden Bough" tells us that people in primitive stages of culture are not sentimental, but entirely practical in their religious affairs. They know they are surrounded by hostility and danger, and they turn to religion for the help it can give them in this difficult task of keeping themselves alive in a decidedly inhospitable world. Their first instinct is to deify the spirits of those ancestors or chieftains who in life were competent leaders, defenders, warriors, hunters, and advisors, and under whose care they had enjoyed to a noticeable degree freedom from sickness and want and discomfiture in battle. Sometimes, instead of an ancestor, they would choose as their deity one of the forces of nature, usually the sun, but also the rain or wind or fire. Sometimes they would deliberately adopt the god of some friendly neighboring tribe who had proved himself an efficacious guide and protector to his worshippers. In those early days these gods were always on probation with their devotees. We are given instances of a tribe's dissatisfaction with the god they had chosen. The medicine man would pick up his image and throw it over the cliff. As a god, he was worthless. They discarded him and tried some other deity. Primitive man seems to have chosen his god much as a modern college football team chooses its coach.

Just when and where the early Israelites made their first contact with their God Jehovah is uncertain. The favorite theory is that shortly after their escape from Egypt and while they were living as nomads along the fringe of the desert south of Palestine they fell in with a small friendly tribe known as the Kenites. They learned about the god of these Kenites, and the more they learned of him the better they liked him. He was a mountain-dweller, and he was primarily a god of war. Otherwise he was austere, just, upright, clean-living, strict, and jealous of his divine dignity. He was a god

of law and order, and simple ways and manners, and he required these traits and qualities in his worshippers. He abominated human sacrifices, and insisted on complete loyalty to himself, and implicit obedience. These characteristics appealed strongly to the best elements in the Israelite nature. The result was that the Israelites adopted him; Jehovah became their God. If there was anything unusual in the arrangement it was that Jehovah was not only on probation with them, they were on probation with him. Naturally, they found that living in a just, orderly, clean, upright, simple way, which was what he required of them, produced in them a physical hardiness and a community solidarity that meant better health, fewer social frictions, and greater prowess in battle. Therefore Jehovah rapidly acquired a firm hold on their loyalty. The danger became not that they might find it necessary to reject him, but that he might find it necessary to reject them; and the better they knew him the more they dreaded this possible rejection.

Out of these sentiments of mutual esteem there emerged almost inevitably the covenant relationship, which became a factor of such importance in Jewish religion. This covenant was a simple practical business agreement between Jehovah and the Children of Israel. Each party needed the other. Jehovah needed worshippers to do him homage, obey his will, and serve his purpose. Israel needed a deity to guide them wisely, protect them from harm, and build them up into a great nation. So the compact was made; we will worship you; you will protect us. And although it existed only in their imagination, it was just as real to them, and just as binding as though engrossed on a parchment scroll and signed, sealed, and witnessed in the most approved style. When Jeremiah foretells the perfect operation of this covenant he uses words that are not as figurative as we think: They shall be my people, and I will be their God. We may assume that was the way the ordinary Jew thought of the Covenant.

Each side had to show itself worthy of the other's respect and fidelity. If either side failed in worthiness, the other side was automatically released from all further obligation. The Feudalism of the Middle Ages furnishes us with an accurate illustration of this Covenant, in the bond between the Baron and his tenants. They tilled his fields and fought his battles. In return he protected them from marauders, and his baroness as Lady Bountiful visited their hovels on errands of mercy.

There was one weak spot in the arrangement. Part of their obligation to Jehovah was to obey his will; but how could they obey his will until they knew what his will was? This deficiency was made good by the Law. Shortly after the deliverance from Egypt, their leader Moses had toiled up the forbidding slopes of Mt. Sinai, and after days of solitary communion with Jehovah, had brought down to them the Decalogue, the ten tremendous words of command which became the nucleus of their Law. Around this nucleus there was built up in the course of many generations a formidable body of moral precepts and mandates that was known as the Sacred Law. Sometimes it is called the Tradition of the Elders, to distinguish it from the original Decalogue of Moses. But since this Tradition of the Elders was merely the carrying out of all that was implied or necessitated by that which Moses had said, every bit of it was regarded as equally valid and authoritative. This Law was, for them, the explicit statement of Jehovah's will; their handbook of righteousness. It supplied the deficiency in their covenant relationship, and told them just what they must do to fulfil their side of the Covenant obligation. It went into minute detail and prescribed the righteous way to perform every act of life from morning to night, and from the cradle to the grave.

Thus the Covenant and the Law went together. The Covenant was their assurance of ultimate safety and national greatness. They were living in a definite agreement with a

God who was abundantly able to do for them far more than they could think or dream; and he would do this, for he was a God who keepeth covenant and mercy with his people—but only on condition that they in turn did their share. Their task was to worship only Jehovah and obey his will, and the Law told them what his will was and how to obey it. Thus in their eyes righteousness was nothing more nor less than strict literal obedience to the Law.

At first it was a rather beautiful relationship. When the Psalmist says: O, how I love thy Law, he spoke for the Nation. They did love it and entered into its obedience with zest. Just when in their history they became fully Covenant-conscious we cannot say; perhaps during the reigns of their first kings, Saul, and David, and Solomon. It was probably at the time when as yet life was simple, and close to the soil, and before the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches had begun to claim their attention.

But, alas, there came a change. Living a settled life in their own promised land, with walled towns like Bethlehem, and one or two sizable cities like Jerusalem and Samaria, with a king on their throne, and a royal court, and an established priesthood, and court favorites, and the beginnings of royal pomp and splendor, their eyes were opened to the alluring possibilities which this world could offer. They learned that it was nice to be wealthy and famous and influential, and to see their wives and daughters decked out in costly raiment, attended by assiduous hand-maidens, and tinkling with earrings and bracelets. They learned that there is such a thing as worldly-ambition, in the gratification of which a certain novel kind of pleasure might be found. But the moment they tried to gratify this worldly ambition they found the Law of Jehovah getting in their way with its restraints and prohibitions. This clash between worldly ambition and Sacred Law was bound to come and increase as their civilization developed its wholly unforeseen problems and complexities; until in desperation they

began to wonder how they were ever going to reconcile the moral laxities and sanctions required by worldly ambition with the rigid demands of the Law of Jehovah. In this dilemma they asked themselves if they had read the Law correctly. Had they construed it strictly where it was meant to be construed loosely? After all, Jehovah must be a reasonable God.

So it must have been about this time that the professional scribe or lawyer appeared on the scene. His function was to study the Law for its possible soft spots, equivocations, ambiguities, where it seems to mean one thing but must of necessity mean something different. Thus they might find arguments by which some of its more troublesome teeth might be drawn, leaving it still the Law but comparatively innocuous. For the fact is that the Law had become a down-right nuisance. They dared not set it aside, for that would make them guilty of a breach of the Covenant, and God would then be automatically released from his obligation to protect and make them a great nation. There came into demand an interpretation of the Law that would require of them the minimum of obedience consistent with safety, and would give them the maximum of liberty to pursue their selfish ambitions. To discover this interpretation, so that they could break the Law while seeming to obey it, was the duty of the scribes and lawyers. This is putting it pretty bluntly, but no more bluntly than Jesus put it: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye make the Law of none avail. Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters, judgment, mercy, and faith; ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer; ye strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Here then is the answer to our question: What fault did Jesus find with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? It was entirely legalistic, merely an outward gesture of obedience; a perfunctory righteousness that did not touch the inward intention; prompted by necessity, by fear of the

consequences that would follow if it was withheld. Moreover it was rendered in a grudging resentful fashion, as much as to say: "Here is something that must be done; we dare not neglect it, but let us do the least that is required and not a bit more." And finally it left the man just where he was before, a whited sepulchre, outwardly fair, inwardly full of all uncleanness.

At this point we must be on our guard against a possible injustice. That there were upright, honest, sincere scribes and Pharisees at the time of Jesus we cannot doubt—genuinely consecrated men, zealous for both Law and Covenant and profoundly anxious to obey the whole Law both in letter and in spirit; men who in every fibre of their being richly merited the reputation they enjoyed as the most thoroughly and solidly righteous people in the nation. Jesus seems to have encountered few if any of such. His must have been an unfortunate experience with scribes and Pharisees. Without exception they were men who aroused his scornful wrath, and he lumps them all together: offspring of vipers, hypocrites, blind guides.

No wonder he warned his disciples that their righteousness must exceed this absurd pretence. In all this we are bound to agree with him. But now we are face to face with another question: If the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was a mere travesty, what was the righteousness that he recommended in its place? What was his exceeding righteousness, which alone could qualify them for the Kingdom of God? What was its fountain-head and its quality? The question puts us on happier ground at once, and brings us a pleasanter task.

The righteousness of Jesus was instigated by just one all-powerful motive force: the love that he felt for his Father in Heaven. It was nothing laboriously thought out; it was not carefully measured and calculated. It was his first spontaneous response to his love of God. Could we ask him face to face to expound this matter more fully, he might very probably

say: If you could love your Heavenly Father as I love him, and if you could feel as I do that his intimate and momentary companionship is the richest possession that life has brought you, your righteousness would present no problem whatever. The simple thought that you could please and gratify your Heavenly Father by thinking, and wishing, and speaking, and living as he wants you to, would be your abundant incentive to righteousness. You would look upon righteousness not as a heavy duty entailing self-denial, but as a happy privilege entailing self-indulgence; a little that you can do for God in return for the blessing of his love.

You would not need the Law of Moses, nor the Tradition of the Elders to tell you what will please God and win his approval. Your love will teach you that wisdom; and from your own intuitive insight you will discover the way to his heart. You would not need any Covenant to urge you to righteousness as the wisest policy; your love of God will be an insatiable passion in your heart, urging you to the very limit of your capacity. You will know what is right before you are told; and you will give what is right before you are asked; and in your eagerness to please him, you will give a great deal more than he requires. If he asks you to go a mile with some weary traveller you will go twain. If he asks you to forgive a blow on the cheek you will turn the other cheek so that you may have two blows to forgive. If he asks you to give your coat to a shivering companion you will hand over your cloak also. Furthermore, this righteousness prompted by your love of God will not be satisfied with mere outward obedience, the mere deed of the hand, or the audible words of the mouth; it will reach into your heart and correct the invisible springs of your thought and intention. Much of your so-called righteousness is nothing but the mechanical frustration of an evil intention; it checks the outward expression of that evil intention but leaves the intention just as strong and just as evil as ever to fester in your heart with its poison. The righteousness

which I urge upon you will go deeper than that. It will dig out the seeds of sin in your heart, so that when God asks you not to commit adultery you will not even look upon a woman with lustful eyes; and when God asks you not to kill you will not even hate; and when God asks you to remember your vows and perform them you will find it is not even necessary to make vows—your entire thought, purpose and desire will be a votive offering to the God you love.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was the price they felt obliged to pay for the protection and destiny which their Covenant promised them. It seemed to them a rather heavy price and they tried to whittle it down by using all the evasions and exemptions and loop-holes they could discover in the Law. The spirit in which they paid that reduced price was about the spirit in which many of us today pay their taxes, sullen and resentful.

In contrast to this the exceeding righteousness of Jesus was the first joyous impulse of his love for his Father in Heaven; his chance to make a return for God's love to him. It was rendered spontaneously, with gratitude and generosity and jubilation; not because he had to but because he wanted to. Their righteousness was prompted by fear. His righteousness was prompted by love. Nowhere in the Gospels is there a more revealing instance of the completely harmonious spirit in which Jesus lived and faced the challenge of human existence.

We speak of the mystery of life, the problem of life, bemoaning the necessity of dividing our attention between two ends, the individual and the divine, the many particular and the one universal. For Jesus these conflicts simply did not exist; life was neither mystery nor problem. God was the "Lifestuff," the origin and perfect embodiment of life. He incarnated himself in his creation, and most abundantly in his human creatures. A man's individuality was God's thought concerning that man, for that man to discover and actualize. His own individuality was God's pencil sketch of the nature

he was to be, the talents he was to possess, the service he was to render, all waiting for him to ink in.

To follow out that thought of God concerning himself, to actualize it little by little, from day to day, even at the cost of Calvary, was his foremost concern. For to do this was to find both life and individuality. His rule was: Not my will but thine be done. There was no self-denial in it, except the denial of the temporary self. His true self could find fulfilment nowhere but in God, for there was no life but God's life; and there was no individuality save in God's thought concerning him. Quite possibly, perhaps during the temptations in the wilderness, he had contemplated, as one contemplates the horrors of a nightmare, the temptation to consult the pride of the flesh and deny God, take matters into his own hands, build up his individuality in his own ways. But the same flash of insight that brought the temptation brought also the swift vision of what would mean. Apart from God there was neither life nor individuality. To deny God would be to leave the highway of life and turn into the blind alley that leads to nothing but nothingness. Such a man is more than a sinner; by his own act he has rendered himself unforgivable. He is a bad investment; a servant with one talent; in him God's gift of life is spoiled and wasted; there is nothing for him but God's rubbish heap, the outer darkness.

It thus becomes evident that his love for God was much more than sentiment. It was the logical gratification of his deepest instinct. In loving God he was loving life, and loving those ways of living that produce life in its full abundance. His righteousness blossomed from that love as naturally as the flower blossoms from its stem. In loving God he found his true individuality, his complete self-consciousness, and his personal pride. For he saw that what we call "the surrender of self to God" is only the surrender of the temporary self, the self of the moment. The eternal self, because it is "lost in God" is thereby "in Godhead found." The corn of wheat must fall

into the ground and perish before it can find its eternal self-fulfilment. Because he wanted fullness of life, and wanted it with all his might and main, therefore, with all his might and main, he loved God, the Source and Giver of life. Because he saw that he could have life in its fullness only on God's terms of righteousness, therefore he accepted that righteousness and made it his rule of living. He did so without the slightest sense of self-denial. He made his choice of his free volition, gratefully, whole-heartedly, and rejoicingly.

Now everybody will acknowledge the beauty of such righteousness as his, and will agree that it exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees as the sun-light exceeds the candle. But for him to recommend such righteousness to his disciples, and by implication to us, will seem to many people almost grotesque. True, Jesus is our ideal of the measure of the stature of the fullness of a child of God. And God is nearer to some of us than to others; but he is lamentably distant from the best of us. It is all well enough for him to be so sure of God; but for many of us God is a perennial problem. It is all well enough for him to love God with all his heart and soul and strength, because with all his heart and soul and strength he wanted that which God was, and gave: life, in its abundance. We have to acknowledge the magnificent heathfulness of his spirit; the completeness of his faith in God, in life, in mankind; the zest and generosity of his enthusiasm for the opportunity of life. We have to think to ourselves: Ah, yes; a splendor of manhood was Jesus of Nazareth; a superb spiritual biography; a sweet-scented manuscript, as Edward Fitzgerald might say. It is all very well for him to be such a man, fearing nothing but believing, lamenting nothing but rejoicing ever—all very well, and proper, and beautiful. But where is the significance for us? How can the example apply to us? How can he ask us to be what he was?

At this point it helps to think of our old friend Abou ben

Adhem—may his race increase. He could not say that he loved God. He did not especially care to. He knew nothing about God, and would not know how to love even if he wanted to. But he was very busy loving his fellow-men, sharing their interests and ambitions, grieving over their sorrows, and rejoicing in their prosperity. He gave them his entire solicitude; and to his intense surprise he found that in doing this he was loving God, and feeling all the far-reaching incentives that such a love brings into action.

Abou ben Adhem is the prophet to help us. Tell us to love God, and at once our minds become clouded with mists of doubt and fogs of uncertainty, and we say: No use; it can't be done. You will have to count me out. But begin to talk to us about humanity, human life, human prospects, human dangers, human mistakes and achievements; or about one of our typical "alabaster cities, undimmed by human tears," its gleaming sky-scrappers, its orderly traffic, its burnished parks and streets, its swarming population, everybody busy, courteous, smiling, helpful—ah, how we love it; how proud we are to belong, citizens, part-owners, anxious for its true prosperity; and you, Mr. Marcus Aurelius, talking rapturously about your blest city of Cecrops, you can save your breath, for Cecrops never saw a city one-tenth as blest as Manhattan, or Washington, or Detroit, or San Francisco, where men and women are living to the very full of life, and at the very heart of its mystery, pulsing, throbbing, irresistible, all-conquering life—to say that we love it is tame; we adore it.

Does it never occur to us that the angel might very well say to us what he said to Abou ben Adhem; that as between the reverence which God excites in the mystic, and the human interest which modern life excites in us there is no difference? The two are the same. In loving our life in all its forms and hopes and promises we are loving God; we are feeling exactly the moral instigations and eager incentives that his love of God brought to the heart of Jesus.

He can ask us to be what he was, because he claimed not a single grace, power, or capacity for himself which he did not recognize in his fellow-men. The same God made us all, and fashioned us in his own image. That may be something we prefer to deny. How convenient it is to be rated as beings of an inferior order! How many sins and shortcomings it excuses! So we have denied it for the last nineteen centuries. But we cannot deny it in his hearing, for that is his first and basic affirmation: he is a stock sample of our humanity; he is what God had in mind when he first started his creative or evolutionary process at work to produce man. What Jesus was, we can be. What he did we can do; and are doing. When Whittier insists that "to him our full humanity, its joys and fears, belongs," he does not drag Jesus down to our level, but lifts us up to his level.

As it happens, we as well as our 'teen-agers are at this moment in great need of a new moral authority, and a peremptory one at that, to remind us there is such a thing as righteousness, and to constrain us to walk more strictly in its paths. Throughout the entire history of Christianity the Holy Bible has served that purpose for us, and for millions of people still serves that purpose. We wonder with some dismay how long it will continue to do so. For a closer study will show us why Jesus, as though dissatisfied, went far beyond the Bible view of righteousness. He saw as clearly as we that it was not the complete and infallible statement of God's will; it is the statement of what its authors thought was God's will. The conclusions of the Bible are the conclusions of human minds working at their best.

Eighty percent of the moral emphasis of the Bible is prohibitive, not constructive. It speaks for a time when righteousness in man was merely sinlessness; to have a conscience void of offence was about as high as a man could climb up the moral ladder. The fact that the man's conscience was void, not only of offence but of everything else, was of no

consequence. God said to him, almost in so many words: Now, my little fellow, be a good boy and don't get in father's way. What doth the Lord require of thee more than to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God? That is all. The ideal of righteousness was innocuous indolence; and that disposes of mankind as having nothing but a nuisance value.

Of course this goes back to the time when human philosophy could make nothing of man's existence on this earth. It could only recognize the fact: Here is man. Why he is here, what his function is, what part he is to play in the divine economy God only knows; and God does not tell us. The idea that man was needed in this world was too preposterous for human thought. God made this world, and God was running it. The cardinal sin of that age was hubris, pride, which occasionally led man to claim the credit for something he thought he had done or made: a victory, a Temple of Diana at Ephesus, a colossus of Rhodes. Man must never feel this hubris, for there is no surer way to infuriate the gods on Olympus. Consider the case of Odysseus, who boasted that he had finally cracked the ten-year stalemate by capturing Troy with his wooden horse, and as a punishment had been driven on a long disastrous voyage all around the Mediterranean Sea before he was allowed to set foot on the shores of his beloved Ithaca.

The Jews also shared the dread of this human pride in accomplishment. Man must remember that he is not an active agent in the world, it is not his province to accomplish things. Although good constructive things may seem to have come to pass as the result of some intent or power in man, they are but coincidences. God happened to do them just at the moment man thought he was doing them, and man must not be deceived by the false logic of "*post hoc ergo propter hoc*." There is but one accomplisher in this world, the Lord God Almighty. He is not only *Artifex Maximus* but *Artifex Solus*. To him

all the credit is due. To withhold that credit is to arouse his jealousy. Therefore, let man remember that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." And let man never say even in his heart: My power, and the might of mine hand have gotten me this wealth. For every blessing is God's gift; every victory is God's intervention; every achievement is God's creative act. And to him be the glory world without end.

From the Tower of Babel to the coming of Jesus this was man's appraisal of himself: an incompetent creature, without any visible function in a system of industry every detail of which is the sole responsibility of an all-powerful, creating and sustaining God. Man's very presence on the scene was a puzzling anomaly which his own philosophy could not explain. To be sure, he did have this nuisance value: he could interfere, get in the way, break laws, upset careful designs, and distract attention. This he must be taught not to do. If he learned his manners he would be allowed to stay, and wander around in God's garden an utterly aimless but well-behaved spectator. That was the extent of his righteousness. It must have been an exhilarating prospect.

Then an inspired rebel named Jesus of Nazareth appeared in the garden, with an idea so revolutionary that the moment he grasped it this aimless well-behaved spectator leaped to his feet with a shout of relief. Man is no puzzling anomaly but the son of God; an earthly incarnation of the Holy Spirit; gifted with the talents of thought and conscience and idealism which qualify him to be God's instrument and partner in a holy design. He has an indispensable function in this world: to serve as the outlet of that Holy Spirit which resides in him, thinks through his mind, hopes through his vision, builds through his hands. He is no unnecessary spectator whose single task is to keep out of God's way. He is God's Executive Arm, to whom the Father says: Son, I

need you. Go work today in my vineyard. His ideal of righteousness is no mere innocence, but the exceeding righteousness of one who knows himself, and has discovered his own power, and can recognize his function, and give himself, an eager volunteer rejoicing in the opportunity.

Looking back with our perspective of time and distance, we can see more clearly than ever how inspired with prophetic insight Jesus was, how rebellious against the impoverished ideas of his day, and how revolutionary his thought of God and man was destined to be. We cannot wonder that he was rejected and crucified by the spirit of his age; for he was poison to the spirit of his age. Nor can we wonder that it has taken the world so many centuries to grow up to his stature, and reach some measure of understanding of his thought.

Now, however, Modern Man, this new phenomenon that has burst upon our ken, can recollect with amusement that as late as the sixteenth century, when the framers of the Shorter Catechism wrote their first question: What is the chief end of man? they could think of no definite function or objective or ideal to set before man as his chief end. All they could do was to resort to a high-sounding vagueness: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. As children we never knew what that meant; neither did they at any time of life. It was the best guess they could make about this puzzling anomaly.

Again, we can recollect that as late as the seventeenth century so able a mind as John Milton still clung to the belief that the ideal righteousness for this unnecessary creature man was innocuous indolence.

God doth not need

Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait.

The Way of Jesus completely abolishes that venerable falsehood: that man has neither purpose nor function in this enterprise of living. Man has both; and to the highest degree. Man is God's Son, Junior Partner, Instrument, Executive Vice President. He is here to act as well as speak for God, a prophet in a double sense. He is to foresee what a thing of beauty this world might be, and then make it that thing. Instantly a brilliant light falls on the landscape, breaking it up into right and wrong, good and bad, shining plateaus of truth and dim valleys of error, gleaming pin points of nobility and black spots of sin. A purpose in life at once reveals the moral topography of life. We can find our moral incentive in our love of life, just as Jesus found it in his love of God.

To him all this was simple and plain. We shall not find it easy to plant the idea, but the entire drift and trend of modern thought is helping us. All of which means that the Way of Jesus has, among other things, its answer to the puzzle of the ages: Why was man created?

Chapter Five

HIS SENSE OF PURPOSE

Each of the great religions has, if not a purpose, at least a function, a place to occupy in human life. It is safe to say that this function is invariably to supply something deficient in human knowledge or power, which, if not supplied, would prove a serious handicap to men in their struggle for existence. These deficiencies vary with different ages or periods of human civilization; and accordingly religion is constantly changing its complexion or emphasis in its effort to meet them. While certain deficiencies may extend through all the ages of civilization, stubbornly refusing to disappear, others have been made good by man's broadening knowledge and increasing power.

With some people this fact gives grounds for the "hope" that the time will come when there will be no deficiencies left in the arsenal of human wisdom, and religion will disappear because there is nothing left for it to do. Such a time has often been predicted, but truly it does not seem to be drawing any nearer. Increasing wisdom reveals increasingly the hidden complexities of our life; and as fast as we make good old deficiencies new ones appear. Old ideals may be fulfilled only to be replaced by new ones still far ahead of us.

Moreover, we do not always hold our gains. For each two steps forward we slip back one, and have to cover the ground a second time. We may say that though our present deficiencies are less in number, they are more serious in quality. In view of these considerations we may as well make

up our minds to the acceptance of religion as a permanently necessary feature in our human living.

These deficiencies which religion tries to make good, if not by valid truth at least by some make-shift truth that serves the purpose for the time, throw a rather interesting side-light on man's development. At an early period man felt himself deficient in knowledge of his world: who made it, and why; what is its nature; how can he fit himself into its mysterious activities in such a way as to insure his own continued existence and safety. Religion, in the form of mythology, gave him an answer, with its various fantastic creation stories whose extravagance barely matched the incredible marvels he witnessed in the course of each year, or each day. There was the rotation of the seasons, cold and heat, tempest and calm, the waxing and waning of the moon. There was the sun with its rather disturbing uncertainties of behavior; if it disappears in the west each evening, will it reappear in the east each morning; if it begins to slide out of the sky in December, will it turn about and climb back into the sky in January. His mythology assured him on all these matters.

At another period man felt himself deficient in the ability to cope with the countless invisible spirits by which he was surrounded. A few of them were friendly; most of them were malicious. How was he to evade the wiles of the evil, and enlist the services of the good? Religion, in the hands of the witch-doctors and medicine-men of the age, came forward with its answer. Evil spirits could be exorcised by certain charms, or by playing them off against each other, or by making things too uncomfortable for them, or by wearing relics and amulets. Good spirits might be invoked by worship-cults, or by extravagant praise and flattery, or by libations of wine, rivers of oil, and hecatombs of burnt offerings. Such religious practices are still carried on in places.

At a still later period man found himself deficient in the power to protect himself from that cluster of hazards that

always endanger human existence: sickness, starvation, and enemies both animal and human. Against such dangers he must have protection. Religion stepped forward with its teaching of a protecting God who "shall give his angels charge over thee lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." All man asked was to be assured of the presence of this protecting God. Disasters and calamities might still come, but so long as they came with the knowledge and consent of his protecting God he readily reconciled himself to them; they were blessings in disguise, parts of a discipline necessary for his good. He taught himself, at the instigation of his religion, a rather profound idea: that so long as God is present with him to guide him in motive and action, then whatever happens will be for his ultimate benefit. As Socrates said just before he drank the hemlock: No real harm can come to a good man.

We can see how, in these successive stages of his development, religion like a flowing river purifies itself and assumes greater spiritual dignity. There was that period which lies well within the limits of history when man's chief deficiency was his inability to cope with life, or to escape futility. The author of Ecclesiastes represents this period. Man felt that he was bound upon a vast wheel of perpetual frustration. He was born in the freshness of hope, and the fulness of opportunity. He was inspired by loving expectations. His natural instincts told him that he was an end in himself, and he grew up filled with the determination to make something of his life, get somewhere, reach some goal. But as he matured he found himself imprisoned within the rigid pattern of his day. Struggle as he might he could not break out of that pattern; and the pattern in itself was not worth the trouble and sorrow and tragedy involved in its living. He had to submit to this predestined futility until death, but even death was no release. He was still bound upon the wheel; he must be reborn and go through the senseless routine over and over again. "The thing that hath been is the thing that shall be. There is no

new thing under the sun. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." The prospect was unendurable. If he could cope with the forces of life so as to produce the element of definite achievement he might be content. Failing that, there was but one last resort: to find some way of escape from it all.

Thus it became the task of religion to devise a method of escape for the soul from this meaningless wheel of existence. In other words religion must now teach the soul how to surrender its individuality and merge itself again into the primordial life-stuff called God. The dew drop must slip again into the shining sea. How to do it was religion's query. The search took man into some of the most rarefied thinking he has ever done. For the body to escape from its life is simple. But the soul, being a fragment of the indestructible life-principle, can hope for no more escape than from this particular pattern of worldly existence. In India, Classical Brahminism suggested a mystic discipline of meditation and prayer so exacting and progressive that at the end of its allotted three score years and ten the soul would be sufficiently etherialized in texture to be freed of its last vestige of earthly dependence, and would merge again with Brahma, the Eternal Soul. This loss of identity emancipated the soul from further need of rebirths. But this method of escape was available only to members of the Brahmin Caste. Therefore there arose a sort of reformed Brahminism known as Buddhism which, through a simplified discipline, made escape possible for the humblest. All that was necessary was a morality in accordance with "The Eight-fold Path," and the elimination of all desire from the heart of the devotee.

Other religions offered escape in other ways: Cynics and Taoists by living as closely and harmoniously as possible to the rhythm of Nature; Epicureans by insisting that things are nothing more nor less than what we think they are, and that by thinking optimistically of the events of experience the friction and tragedy of life may be avoided. Even the Stoics

agreed that man was unable either to understand or control the forces about him. Of himself he could do nothing with life. He could only enact to the best of his ability that role in the inscrutable drama that seemed to have been assigned to him, and find his satisfaction in a somewhat defiant self-respect.

As we very well know, religion had one more answer to this deficiency, the inability to escape. There was at least one definite achievement wholly within man's power — his personal salvation. Why waste time and effort in vain endeavor to get anywhere with or in this earthly life? It is nothing but a period of probation during which the soul may prove itself worthy of heavenly bliss. Therefor:

"Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also."

Obeys God's laws; accepts his "scheme of salvation"; puts your faith in Christ's vicarious atonement; remembers that "we are but strangers here," and our heavenly home shall receive us for all eternity. What more can one ask?

This is the religion that bears the name "Christianity," our own back-ground. No right-minded man can fail to harbor a deep affection for it, and a deep gratitude; for it has done a vast amount of good in the world. It has been both guide and incentive to our civilization, presiding with jealous attention over its development, and at every turning point speaking its warning: Remember, in each choice you are either earning everlasting bliss or incurring everlasting punishment.

Yet, granting the nobility of its intentions, and the undeniable wealth of its service to mankind, it is essentially a form of escapism; perhaps we can say the latest and the last form we shall ever see. It is based on the same two assumptions that underlie every escapist religion: first, this world is a hopelessly unmanageable place, under the government of an unmoral, unprogressive Nature, whose sole object is to

accept the multitudinous forces that have been given her, and by playing them off against each other, discover that precarious balance of thrust and counter-thrust which must be her life-line, the only path of life she can ever know or want. Second, man, the great anomaly, is a "strange, piteous, futile thing," with neither function nor responsibility in this world, and quite powerless to change the complexion of his earthly environment into a habitation better suited to his tastes.

Working on these two assumptions, Christianity has devised the best answer it could, at the time of its beginnings, to the problem of man's existence. It said: To be sure, your world is a vale of tears; in it ye shall have tribulation. Get that fact firmly fixed in your mind: man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. You as man want to live in a kind of world that this world can never be. For the forces that govern the character of this world are physical forces. They are calculated to make this world a place where might makes right; where physical prowess, agility, adaptability, self-preservation at the expense of all other types, robbery, deceit, treachery, and similar qualities must of necessity be the accepted virtues. Obviously, such forces will never fashion this world into the kind of world you want for your habitation; that is, a world in which spiritual qualities and values will be at least as highly rated as physical. And there is nothing you can do about it. Yet, if you will remember that there is such a world as you want, a world exactly suited to your tastes, and which you call heaven; and if you will endure to the end, hold fast your integrity, the deliverance will come. Death will bring escape for your soul from this prison-house of flesh, and will open your way to the unimaginable satisfactions of heaven. I, Christianity, am that way of escape for you. Be loyal to my requirements, and heaven will reward you for your endurance.

At this point it is well to remind ourselves that a Christianity of this type could not have been derived from the

teachings of Jesus, except by laying a false emphasis on some of his sayings, and wholly ignoring the rest. True: he often spoke of heaven, either to promise people they would go there, or warn them they would not. Also he evidently thought of heaven geographically, somewhere in the skies. It is the place where only God's will is done, where the perfect reign of God is uninterrupted. Evidently he believed that this Kingdom of God, or reign of God was not confined to heaven, but could extend to earth, so that earth would be a part of heaven. He plainly taught that it is God's intention to extend his reign to earth, so that in time even this earth should be admitted into God's Union of Heavenly States. He nowhere hints that this earth is a hopeless place, forever unfit for statehood in that Union, forever doomed to lie outside the limits of that Union, a place to despair of, to give up as a bad job, to escape from. On the contrary, he always implies that it can be, and is being, made fit for that Union. That is precisely God's purpose. Therefore it is his purpose to do his utmost to help. Never for an instant did Jesus feel the weight of aimlessness. Never for a moment did he doubt that man was put here for a reason; he had a function; he was an active agent in God's design; he could succeed, because God cannot fail. Those who co-operate with God cannot help sharing God's triumph.

A significant question comes to mind: Are we at this moment witnessing the gradual obsolescence of a Christianity whose one great offering is the promise of a personal salvation from a hopelessly unsatisfactory and unmanageable world? It would seem that we are. Thousands of young people in all Christian countries, well-educated, serious, thoughtful, honest, and devout, just the people whom any religion would be proud to attract, are feeling decidedly heart-sick over their Christianity. Nor is it hard to see why. They are not interested in what Christianity offers them. When Christianity forgets its theology and says: Come now, never

mind the theology; never mind personal salvation and how to earn it. We can find some way to cross those bridges when we get to them. Here we are, a group of congenial friends, and all members of one church. We can be a strong influence for good in our town. Let us do what we can to make this town of ours a better and a happier place; — when Christianity says that it makes the only effective appeal there is left for it to make to modern hearts. It is rather significant to see how many millions of today's Christians join their churches for no other reason than their desire to undertake a little social service, or occupy themselves in a modest amount of church work, or form some new friendships, or listen once a week to some fairly good music and pulpit oratory. If our churches were to confine their appeal to the theology they have to offer, and insist on genuine theological conformity, seventy-five percent of their membership would drop off like so many iron filings from a dead magnet.

The fact of the matter is that Christian theology is at a loss how to adjust itself to this recent phenomenon known as Modern Man. He is as unlike the man of one hundred years ago as the Cave-dweller was unlike the Anthropoid; and his appearance is far more disturbing. He looks upon himself and his world in a new way. He is no longer passive and acquiescent in his attitude to Nature and Nature's world. He is critical and dissatisfied, for frankly Nature's world is not good enough for him. He does not seek escape from this unsatisfactory world, but can see real possibilities in it, and demands the chance to labor for their realization. He no longer considers himself a superfluous item in the tale of creation, for whom there is neither place nor responsibility. He has discovered his ability and his moral dignity. He can think, and plan, and foresee, and best of all he can put his planning into effect. He has ceased to tremble and cower before an irate Nature; in fact he is afraid of nothing under the sun except his fellow-man, and that is not so much a fear as a challenge

to his wit and perseverance, an incentive to him to find that successful way, which must exist somewhere, to live in harmony of purpose and in peaceful co-operation with his fellow-man.

Last of all personal salvation does not seem to him quite in keeping with the sublimity of God's methods and objectives. That God should demean himself to the expedient of bribing him to behave by the promise of personal salvation seems to him rather undignified. Or that such mountains should undergo such labor merely to give birth to so ridiculous a mouse as his personal salvation strikes him as being a "*reductio ad absurdum*." With his self-respect he has learned a truer sense of values and a becoming humility. He is content to take his chance of personal salvation with all the rest of human kind. He does not want more than he deserves.

Very well then, what does he want? That is an absorbing and a difficult question. It is never easy to know ourselves; and that is precisely what religion asks Modern Man to do: Here am I all ready to help you; but you must tell me how. What do you need? What is the deficiency you want me to supply?

We claim to be wise and powerful and self-reliant and brave; but can we say to what end we are wise and powerful and self-reliant and brave? We are all dressed up, but must we not admit that we have nowhere to go? We are aimless; our modern deficiency is a lack of adequate sense of purpose. The upshot of it all is that when this Modern Man makes his requisition of religion he asks exactly what Jesus offered in his Way, almost twenty centuries ago: the assurance that he is a son of God, an incarnation of the Divine Spirit, fashioned in the divine likeness, endowed with divine qualities; and the assurance that his life has meaning and promise, a destiny awaits him not in some deferred existence but right here and now; this existence is as much a part of God's creation as any heaven; this time is as much a moment in God's eternity

as any time on Mars, or Formalhaut, or Aldebaran; and the assurance that he was created for a purpose, a function is ready for him as soon as he is ready for it, and it is the most solemn function of all—to be God's son, junior partner, fellow-laborer in the fulfilling of God's purpose.

That it has taken all these intervening centuries for him to reach an intelligent understanding of what Jesus was trying to say is not wholly his fault. His attention has been completely pre-empted by the demands of Christian theology which could not have more thoroughly distracted him if it had deliberately tried to. For there has always been the auto-da-fe, the "dungeon, fire, and sword" ready to punish his least aberration into the fields of independent thought and judgment.

Doubtless it is as well. A great deal had to be done not only to himself but to human society before he could be ready for anything so drastic as the Way of Jesus. In that preparation his experience with Christian theology has been of the utmost value. It has not only matured and developed his mind, it has also ordered and humanized his society. Now he is a mentally and spiritually competent being, dwelling in a society that grants him freedom to exercise his competence, read and think and judge and choose and decide for himself. Jesus has had to wait a long time for his properly qualified disciple. At last he seems to have appeared upon the scene. And he turns to the Way of Jesus with a rejoicing heart.

Jesus was hardly the first teacher in the world to affirm that God is a Unity of Purpose. Isaiah has better right to that distinction. But the trouble with Isaiah is that he presumed to define that purpose in explicit terms. He was speaking to a little nation confused by the fear that their days were numbered. Between two such powers as Assyria and Egypt they would inevitably be crushed out of existence, and their first desperate concern was to save what they could out of the approaching disaster. Normal living is never possible in such conditions. It was Isaiah's aim to restore their morale

by assuring them that God's inexorable purpose was to make them the supreme nation in the world, and that they could trust God to preserve them in the present danger so that they could fill the role he was holding in store for them.

Jesus made no such mistake. He taught that God is, among other things, a Unity of Purpose. He is engaged in a vast undertaking. He is no idle deity with nothing to do but to be worshipped and glorified by a race of mankind whom he had created for that particular function. He is a toiling God, with a holy end in view. Jesus never presumes to say what that end is; he never defines or specifies. His favorite term for that end is as general as a term can be: the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He seems to mean by this: that condition in which man's faith in God's benevolent wisdom shall be so compelling, and man's loyalty to God shall be so urgent that in each occasion of life the will of God shall take priority over every vagrant impulse or desire, and "be done on earth" as promptly and effectively as "it is done in heaven."

With but few exceptions Jesus refrains from definitions or descriptions of this Kingdom of Heaven. What could he, more than any other, know of such things? He does say that there shall be neither marrying nor giving in marriage in the Kingdom of Heaven; that the last shall be first, meaning that God's opinion of fitness for the Kingdom may very well be just the opposite of man's; that the unquestioning trust and teachableness of little children shall be the best qualification for admission; that those attributes which he calls treasure in heaven, sympathy, consideration, helpfulness, purity of heart, hunger and thirst after righteousness, longing for God's approval, self-respect—all of which make a man rich toward God, shall be the true wealth of the Kingdom. Such comments are obvious. Concerning the details that so deeply interest us: how the Kingdom of Heaven is to be governed, what particular social or political pattern it is to follow, he has nothing to say. Enough for him that God has a purpose;

that man, offspring of the Breath of God and embodiment of his spirit and power, makes a fatal error when he looks upon himself as not needed in this world, with nothing to do save keep out of the way and resign himself to a life of inoffensive indolence. Manifestly, man's duty is to recognize this Divine purpose and prepare himself for full participation in it. This world is not a meaningless place. Human life is neither superfluous nor incompetent. If only as an inward whisper every true heart should hear that ineffably moving injunction: I must be about my Father's business.

Thus Jesus taught, first, that God has a purpose for human life; this purpose is still unfinished, creation is not yet an accomplished fact, the creative process is still going on. Second, that man was created to be God's workman, and may be trusted to know that God has a purpose, and to enlist himself in the task of fulfilling it. We find nothing more definite about the Kingdom of God than these two items of his teachings. Jesus was no doctrinaire. He cherished no utopian dream. The sociological terms we use with such familiarity, Absolutism, Monarchism, Collectivism, Communism, Totalitarianism, Democracy, would have sounded to him like words from a foreign language. He did not even know what sociology is. All he knew was that there is something wrong with this world, too much wilfulness, greed, cruelty, and hard-hearted indifference. It can be put right, and man himself can and must put it right.

Jesus is a disappointment to many worthy people who wish they could find something in his words that would lend authority to a favorite social panacea of their own. Earnest efforts have been made to segregate and systematize the so-called "social teachings" of Jesus. Many of his teachings can of course be applied just as well to social as to personal problems. His strictly social teachings can be exhausted in less than a dozen sentences: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you;

judge not, that ye be not judged; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you; woe unto that man through whom the offence cometh; whosoever would be great among you, let him be least of all and servant of all; if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses, and the like. Whatever social technique can be evolved from these words can hardly be attributed to him. One can argue that such definite measures as the Sherman Act against combinations in restraint of trade, or single tax, or the prohibition amendment, or universal suffrage find their ultimate derivation from something he said, or at least from the general spirit of his teachings, but we may greatly doubt that he would consent to be held responsible for them.

We may as well face the fact that Jesus shows no interest whatever in any form of Collectivism as an organism in its own right. He was anything but anti-social, yet he was a pronounced individualist. The idea that a group of individuals can be assembled in such a way as to constitute a higher organic entity with its own superior group-consciousness, and co-ordination to environment, and pattern of thought, all distinctly greater, wiser, more enlightened than the sum-total power and enlightenment of its constituent members would have left him completely bewildered. To him religion in all its expressions was a personal matter. A nation or a society was a fortuitous assembly of individuals. Its religious index was simply the average level of the religiosity of its members. It could be raised or lowered only by raising or lowering that index in each individual member. However regrettable it may be, we shall have to admit that Jesus knew nothing of our mass-psychology. Even if he had he probably would have laughed it off.

Psychology has so profoundly influenced our technique of social betterment that it demands real hardihood to suggest that perhaps we are working it for more than it is worth, and placing too much dependence on its efficacy. If there are

grounds for this misgiving we can find a much-needed corrective by taking a quiet and serious look at the psychological simplicity that was in Jesus. He never used the word "Society," yet one gathers that to his way of thinking the only way to raise the moral tone of society is to improve the moral character of each member. A good society results from the goodness of its members; and the only way to improve the members is the laborious one-at-a-time, man-by-man method of moral self-cultivation: faith and thought and self-examination and persistent self-discipline and prayer; God, be merciful to me a sinner. Make the members good and the society will be good.

We may hesitate to agree, and justify our hesitation by citing Brook Farm. Its members were without exception the best, most upright and high-principled men and women New England could boast. Yet their social experiment was a dismal failure. We may go on to argue that human nature instinctively tries to justify the expectations by which it is surrounded. Surely, a good society surrounds its members with nothing but good expectations, its men and women will at once feel the challenge of those good expectations and will turn into the kind of people who are fit to live in that society. But Jesus would reply by reminding us that this change is not necessarily an authentic improvement in character, but only a skin-deep improvement in manners and behaviour. Moreover, if the good expectations in society intensify the good traits in the man, what prevents the rule working in the opposite direction? Will not the evil expectations in society intensify the evil in the man? To bury a potato in a basket of peaches does not always result in the potato turning into a peach. Sometimes the peaches will turn into potatoes.

Jesus would soon dispose of the argument that a good society makes a good man. Society does not possess miraculous power. It will teach an adaptable man good manners, and good manners will sometimes encourage him to cultivate good

morals. But the force which produces the Kingdom of God must be more reliable than "sometimes." There is but one such force: individual character. And there is no substitute for character. Nor is there any short cut to the Kingdom of God. In the Gospel of Luke he utters a few words that reveal his theory of the building of the Kingdom of God: "The Kingdom of God is within you." To be sure, the words are admittedly ambiguous. They can mean that the Kingdom of God is among you, in the midst of you; or that it is inside of you personally. The context favors the latter meaning. A Pharisee had just asked him when the Kingdom of God would come. He replied that the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. There is nothing visible about it. No one can see it or hear it. For it is an inward change that takes place in the secret intimacies of each heart. It is within you. The only way to establish it is for each person to become a little private one-man Kingdom of God in his own right. When all have made that change there will be the Kingdom of God on earth.

We may take it or leave it, as we please. But Jesus makes neither concession nor compromise. Righteousness is not to be derived from outward circumstances or institutions; not from the Temple, nor the Law, nor the blood of Abraham. To all such matters he is quite cold. They complained that they had to pay tribute to Caesar. To be sure: Caesar happens to be their ruler. But what of it? Why bother about so trivial a matter? Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that belong to God. Righteousness does not depend on such things, and righteousness is all that counts. It can be found only in the sacred privacies of the heart, in the closet, with the door shut, alone with God.

We may complain that Jesus is archaic in his teaching. He could retort that what we really want is a chance to shift our moral responsibility to another pair of shoulders. If we are not what we should be how nice to be able to say that the fault is not ours; it is the fault of society, or of an unfortunate

inheritance, or of some pathological condition in ourselves, like high blood pressure, or hardening of the arteries! If we could lay before him our hope of making this world a better and happier place, he would commend the purpose; but he would warn us that a good world must begin with good men and women. He would remind us that each individual is in himself a world in microcosm. If a man wants his little one-man world to be good, he must first "make thine eye single that thy whole body may be full of light." And since he who is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much, the same rule applies in the larger dimension. If we want a good orchard we must first make each tree good, and that tree is in each case the self. If we want a happy peaceful co-operative world, we must first pluck the beams of self-interest, avarice, prejudice and suspicion out of our own eyes. A good wall must begin with good bricks; and it will stay sound only so long as the bricks stay sound. That is the testimony of Jesus. We would be wise to heed it.

For this testimony has a point for us, and it is uncomfortably sharp. Our besetting sin just now is haste. We are living in a precarious world, full of ill-will, mutual suspicion, anxiety, and the threat of war. We are so eager to have it a better world, what dear little Miranda calls a brave new world, that we act like the man building a new house: in such a hurry to get into his up-to-date living room and kitchen and chambers that he skimps the foundation. If some visitor from Mars should tell us that our foundations of moral stamina and integrity, of personal character and self-respect are not solid enough to support the new house could we contradict him? Or if he should warn us that we are putting all our confidence in the brave new world, trusting that its very braveness in justice, liberty, opportunity, comfort, and convenience will somehow transform its people into worthy citizens, must we not admit that he is right? We seem to be working on the theory that a well-designed orchard will influence each tree

in such a wonderful way that it will automatically turn into a good tree; or that a handsome graceful wall by its very beauty will turn each brick into a good brick.

Working on this theory we claim that man's higher possibilities have never had a chance. The burdens incident to a struggle for existence, like danger, rivalry, treachery and poverty, have been so heavy that they have held him down to the level of nature, red in tooth and claw. And that if he can be freed from these weights man will of his own accord rise to higher levels of manhood. Often the theory appears to work; but often is not enough. We must be sure that it will always work. And on closer examination we find that all the theory does is give the man a chance to be himself. Whether the theory works or not depends entirely on the man. If he is clean-hearted and right-spirited he has the chance to live his clean and honorable life, and the theory works. If he is tainted in heart and evil-spirited he also has his chance to live his dark and predacious life, and the theory fails. It all comes back to the true character of the individual. We want the theory to work; and there is just one prayer to make: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." When that prayer is answered the theory will work. Little Miranda's brave new world will be a dream come true.

How timely and urgent these thoughts are will be evident the moment we look about us and take account of stock. We are passing out of one chapter of history and into the next. We have gone far enough in the transition to make a few comparisons, and note a few of the points wherein the new chapter will differ from the old. First, we notice a striking change in the creature man who is making the transition from old chapter to new. In the old he was primarily conscious of his weakness; his inability to control the forces of life or assume the management of his own fate. He was the submissive victim of circumstance, not active but acted upon, self-distrustful, doomed to live in a world that fell far short

of his ideal, even of his requirements. His foremost virtues were patience, quiet resignation, and a stubborn faith "that somehow good will be the final goal of ill." He did not presume to say how. He left that to God. All he could do was cast his burden on the Lord, and trust that the Lord would sustain him.

As he approaches this new chapter man is conscious, primarily, of his new-found strength; conscious of the privilege that his scientific learning and the accumulated wisdom of long experience have given him, the privilege of claiming a larger part in the management of his own fate. He is not passive but defiant, not submissive but angry; not the victim of circumstance, but determined to pull the boot on the other leg and force circumstance into his own pattern. He has learned self-reliance, and self-reliance has turned him into a rebel who will no longer put up with this unsatisfactory world, but will do something about it even though he wrecks the whole fabric. His foremost virtues are non-acquiescence in things as they are, an aspiration that speaks in peremptory tones, and a stubborn faith that the time has come for him to "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire, and remould it nearer to the heart's desire."

Thus we can discover another point where chapter two differs radically from chapter one. In chapter one all life was under the direction of hard-featured nature, with her struggle for existence, her natural selection, and her survival of the fittest, who points to the Blonde Beast as her hero and prototype, and fashions the world to his requirements. But in chapter two nature will have this self-reliant Modern Man as a rival. He will commit the presumptuous sin of casting his gauntlet at nature's feet, in dispute of her claim to this ancient solitary reign. His hero is the Christ that is to be, his larger heart and his kindlier hand. His aim is a world fashioned to the requirements of that Christ; a world in which the unpractical, unphysical graces of the spirit shall not be

ridiculed as so much sentimental rubbish, but shall be valued as they deserve. It will be a world in which innocence and beauty and trust shall not be punished because they are weak, but cherished and protected for their own sake and in which those clemencies of the soul, like love and self-denial, friendship and loyalty, mercy and helpfulness, gratitude and forgiveness, sympathy and generosity, that cleanse life of all terror and hatred and ferocity, and give it instead beauty and grace and charm, shall not be stigmatized as survival-liabilities, mere luxuries too costly to be indulged, but shall be coveted earnestly by all as among the best things within man's attainment. In short, it will be a world in which every echo of Christlikeness in the heart of mankind will find a grateful welcome, and a safe lodging, and a jealous protection.

Can Modern Man remake this "place of wrath and tears" into such a world? Jesus would tell him that he can in time; but much time will be needed. It is his task, the task for which he has been created in God's image, and placed in God's vineyard. Apparently every great achievement in man's progress is like a fortress surrounded by a treacherous fair-way, the fair-way of failure. It is a belt of rugged territory full of hidden snares and dangerous pitfalls, but it must be crossed before the fortress of achievement can be stormed. Modern Man cannot be sure of success on the first trial, nor the tenth, nor the hundredth. Life is not so simple as that. But he can be sure that even in his defeat he has disposed of one more of those prerequisite failures and has brought the ultimate victory that much nearer.

With this prospect in view then, we can make our requisition of religion. We are devoted, but we need the Supreme One to claim our devotion. We are strong, but we need the all-absorbing purpose to absorb our strength. We are tenacious, but we need the great vision to justify our tenacity. We are ingenious, but we need the shining hope to inspire our ingenuity. We are zealous and enthusiastic, but we need an

imperative task that shall attract our enthusiasm and exhaust our zeal. In short, all our verbs are transitive and active, but we need the adequate predicates to set them to work, to give them direction, and to crown them with accomplishment.

Here in a nut-shell is the secret of Jesus: he had found his predicates. This is why he still towers head and shoulders above a halting, aimless humanity. He had found a Heavenly Father to love, a divine purpose to share, an eternal truth to obey, a loving confidence to vindicate, and a holy pride to justify. We cannot walk with him and feel it in his presence as Matthew and Philip might have felt it; but we can read his words and find his self-integrity over and over again, not only in the words but between the words, its unmistakable redundancies sounding throughout the Way of life that he left his followers to tread.

This process of growing up to manhood divides itself so quietly into its three stages that most of us pass through its grades quite unconscious of what we are doing. The primary grade witnesses our growth from thoughtless self-engrossed children content with toys and make-believes, into wistful dissatisfied urchins who want something too vague to name. It soon dawns upon us that we want to be men. We are like the people whom Jesus blessed in his first Beatitude: poor in spirit, beginning to recognize and regret their own spiritual poverty. The intermediate grade finds us in the class-rooms and playing-field learning how to think and understand; also how to run and jump and wrestle and swim; cultivating abilities both mental and physical. We are like the people whom Jesus urged to ask and seek and love and believe, thus to develop the fibres and tissues of their spiritual systems. The upper grade shows us mature men and women; professions chosen, careers sketched out, ready for definite responsibilities, aimed at definite objectives. We corroborate the theory upon which Jesus proceeded: those who develop their spiritual abilities find that the abilities themselves are fastidious. Like

St. Christopher, they will seek the loftiest possible cause, the worthiest possible objective. It is human nature to seek for our powers their highest self-consecration. Verbs well exercised may be trusted to find their proper predicates.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

As a river might flow from a high lake, the religion of Jesus flowed from its exalted fountain-head. We have heard it many times, but we cannot hear it too often: the fountain-head, the high mountain lake, was his awareness of God. It was constant, sustaining, intimate, and ineffably precious. From this lake his religion flowed in three main streams.

First: his attitude to his fellow-men. They were all the children of God, and the objects of God's love. If he loved God he had no choice but to love them. He wanted no choice; he wanted to love them. He wanted to treat them, so far as they themselves would permit, in all the ways that an unfeigned love might suggest. Even the few whom he could not love, for whom he could not suppress a feeling of positive aversion, had only themselves to thank for such a response from him. In each case it was their own cold-blooded inhumanity to others that awakened his aversion. If Jesus hated at all, it was for but one reason: man's injustice to his weaker fellow-man.

Second: His moral incentive. Why should he strive to be righteous? Because righteousness was pleasing to God. If he loved God he had no choice but to be as righteous as he could. But he wanted no choice. He wanted to please God. So he gives the world its first shining example of what righteousness ought to be: something prompted neither by fear nor by duty, but by love; and therefore spontaneous, anticipating, generous, and joyous; a righteousness that does not have to

be told what to do, but knows already, and does it at once, and twice as much, and leaves the Law, like a corpulent policeman, wheezing along half a mile behind.

Third: His sense of purpose. His Heavenly Father was a God of purpose. He had a business in hand; an objective to reach; a design to fulfil. If he loved God he had no choice but to help him in that purpose. But here again, he wanted no choice. He wanted to help him; nothing gave him greater happiness. He wanted, if it were possible, to know that purpose, make it his own, find some place in it however humble that he could fill, and devote his whole life to the golden days and peaceful nights of a whole-hearted, rejoicing consecration of self to the service of God. Herein he gives the world the secret of happiness: to want to do what you ought to do. Also he is one of the first if not the first to correct a long-standing misapprehension in the mind of mankind: that man has no special function in the industrial economy of this earthly life; at least nothing more definite than to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." If Jesus could have furnished the answer to that first question in the Shorter Catechism it probably would have been this: "The chief end of man is to love his Father in Heaven, and be about his Father's business."

The Way of Jesus in its basic features proceeds with inevitable logic from the fountain-head in these three main streams. Each stream waters its own proper region in the terrain of human thought and action. But in addition to these three main streams there are many lesser brooks and rivulets that serve to beautify the more restricted areas in the broad fields of human life. To love God as Jesus did is to set into active operation a spiritual force that is bound to affect every aspect and situation in life, whether small or great. Many of these we find in the Sermon on the Mount. They cannot be omitted in any respectable attempt to reconstruct the Way of Jesus. Here are some of the minor details in that Way.

Among the first words in the record are the Beatitudes,

as though they were prompted by his foremost concern: Do people want to love God? Remember that God does not force himself or his gifts of grace upon you. If you do not want them you need never be burdened by them. There is one rigid condition on which you may have them: that you want them. Only those who are poor in spirit, that is to say, who recognize and regret their own spiritual poverty can possess the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who mourn can be comforted. Only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness can be filled. You must do your share; and the first item in your share is to want what God is waiting to give.

Never be satisfied with the praise of this world. For the world's praise means only that you have met the tawdry, short-sighted, and imperfect standards of manhood that the world sets up for itself. Work for God's praise, which means that you have met God's perfect standards of manhood. When men speak well of you it is a bad sign; you have satisfied nothing but their very humble and perverted expectations. When men revile you and persecute you it is a cause for rejoicing and gladness, for it indicates that you are aiming at a standard too high for their comprehension. To be misunderstood and persecuted is the fate of every true seeker of God.

Remember that your traffic with God is your own personal affair, too holy for any sort of publicity. Your reticence in these matters shows that you value them properly, as a sacred secret. On the other hand, never betray him with whom you conduct this secret traffic by living openly in the sight of men otherwise than as his secret promptings command you to live. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works. Do not fear to be conspicuous for whatever virtue you may possess. Examples of virtue are too rare to be concealed. What you have been told in the darkness speak out in the light. What you have heard in the ear preach forth from the house tops. Let your communion with God be intimate

and sacred. But let the results of that communion be as a candle giving light to all who are in the house.

Expect no credit for these dehydrated virtues, such as lending to those from whom you may want to borrow, or showing friendship to those whose friendship you may sometime need or crave. Even sinners will do as much. In general never be content with reciprocity in kindness, for obviously self-interest is the incentive in each case and moral credit is wanting. Put your virtue on a higher plane; befriend those who cannot reciprocate. Always be modest. Never be virtuous or charitable just to show off. Do your alms in secret, and your praying in decent privacy, never on street corners.

As to forgiveness of injuries, let it be habitual and untiring with you. Your forgiveness to others is the only thing that justifies God in forgiving you, and to be unforgiving is to be unforgivable. Vindictiveness is a boomerang; beware of it for it will do more injury to you than to your enemy.

You are an immortal soul in a perishable body; and your soul is as much more important than your body as immortality is longer than the term of your bodily life. Do not impoverish your soul for the sake of enriching your body. Heavenly treasure is preferable to any amount of precarious earthly wealth. Look upon earthly wealth with a large seasoning of scorn, and do not be deceived by its glitter. Not only will you possess it for a very limited time, but in its acquisition and enjoyment you will be pre-occupied to the prejudice of more important things. Alas! How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!

The fact that he was a poor man speaking to poor men seems to lend encouragement to the wholly unjustifiable suspicion that his views on earthly wealth are not untouched by the sour-grapes argument. Who can deny that those views are corroborated over and over again in our own observation? It is doubtful that his experience ever brought him face to face with the emancipated rich man who makes his wealth a

blessing not only to himself, but first of all to everybody else. We know such men; but we also know the other kind.

Judging from the intensity of his feeling it is evident that nothing aroused him to such indignation as to see wealthy, influential upper-class people taking advantage of their position to exploit and oppress weaker people, helpless women, even little children. Poverty and misery are so common in overpopulated Oriental countries that even potentially decent people get hardened to it and take it in their stride without so much as a second glance. Familiarity breedeth all sorts of moods that are not creditable. But no amount of familiarity could thicken his skin to this despicable habit of actually making misery more miserable for the sake of some fancied personal profit. When his own disciples James and John, counting on the special place they held in his affection, begged their favor of him: Grant us to sit on thy right hand and on thy left in thy Kingdom, we can easily feel how discouraged he was. Here was the same contemptible Gentile habit, using their power to get ahead of their fellow-disciples. Quietly and patiently he lays down his principle all over again: Your power is given you, not for self-advancement, but for greater service to those weaker than you. Your power is the measure of your indebtedness to your fellow-men. In God's eyes, the only way to become great is to be helpful to others; and the only way to be chief is to help and serve your weaker brethren. Strength is given you, not that you may do less but that you may do more. Wealth is given you, not that you may escape your obligations but that you may increase them.

Some of his precepts are too idealistic to be practicable. We as well as they are chronically between the horns of a dilemma. We have a duty to self, and a duty to God; a duty to the present moment and a duty to the future; a duty to the instant need, and a duty to principle. Very often the two duties conflict, and we are forced to disappoint one or the other. We are so accustomed to this awkward situation that

we have learned to strike the compromise and live with it daily. We say with a laugh that all life is a compromise and our task is to make the best of it. But he had no love for compromise, and no patience with divided allegiance. Perhaps his idea was that the duty to self, or the present, or the instant need would be automatically discharged in our fidelity to God, or future, or principle. Perhaps he felt the need of over-emphasizing the duty to God, and future, and principle because that was the duty habitually forgotten and neglected. As we have seen, the decisiveness of his nature rendered him prone to hyperbole. At all events his teaching at this point is definite and categorical.

You cannot divide yourself between two loyalties. Choose your allegiance: God or mammon, one master or the other, for me or against me, and be consistent. Be advised by me and choose God. Of course this will involve you in endless anxiety over your earthly comfort and security. But consider how needless is most of your anxiety. The birds and the wild flowers neither plant, spin, nor store up in barns, yet they are adequately fed and gorgeously clothed. God has a way of caring for his creatures. Your anxiety is not very flattering to him. If it is your fate to live hand-to-mouth, very well; accept it with tranquility. Be not anxious for the morrow; one day at a time. If you must be anxious, the evil of the present day is sufficient to absorb all your anxiety.

Such teaching is too idealistic for practical use. In our life we must take thought for the morrow or we come to grief. Every house-wife will tell us that if she did not ask herself the questions: What shall we eat? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? she would cause more hardship to human bodies than she could possibly compensate by any amount of personal rest unto her soul. Most of us can confess that we read these words with that guilty sense of exhilaration which we feel when a soul over-burdened by the weight of nagging care suddenly kicks over the traces, casts off the whole burden of

practical concerns, and indulges in an hour of complete relaxation in the ivory tower of pure idealistic day-dreams. Such fits of rebelliousness are refreshing, especially to housewives. They are grateful to Jesus for suggesting them. It is good to be reminded that even though we cannot know them there are such things as ideals and day-dreams.

Also these impractical teachings may help us to learn how to do our worrying against a back-ground of imperturbable tranquility. Wordsworth says that poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. May there not be such a thing as emotion endured in tranquility? May it not even be that Jesus had something of the sort in mind when he spoke the words? Go ahead and worry all you must, or all you please; but be sure to keep your worrying superficial. Underneath it let there be always a solid basis of tranquility.

In the class of impractical teaching we shall have to put his rebuke to Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." If we did not occasionally savor the things that be of men there would be nobody left to savor the things that be of God. Also, there is his rebuke to poor Martha: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that better part." Especially, there are these comments of his concerning wealth; its acquisition and possession. They all indicate an attitude of hostility, disapproval, sometimes bitter criticism, as in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. His real grievance against worldly wealth and those who have it, is something far more respectable than the natural feud 'twixt "Want and Have." It is, that wealth so easily becomes an end in itself, instead of a means to the true end of a man's life: which is the development and refinement of all his powers to the height of his possible manhood. This grievance is clearly revealed in at least two of his sayings: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," and "What is

a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Both these sayings we can accept as statements of stark literal truth, and be grateful that somebody has been brave enough to utter them.

The same grievance is implied in his encounter with the Rich Young Ruler, who declared that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up, and still felt uncertain of his salvation. Mark tells us that "Jesus, beholding him, loved him." The idea of Jesus loving a rich man strikes us as being such a novelty that we ask, why did he love him? Because the young man agreed so perfectly with him that wealth is not an end in itself. He had wealth but he was still dissatisfied and uncertain.

With the exception of a few such instances which defy criticism, we can only read his teachings about wealth by making, in simple fairness to him, a proper allowance. He was completely ignorant of our highly-articulated, inter-related industrial civilization; how essential a vigorous prosperous industry is to our way of living; what an absolute necessity the rich man is as steward of the nation's resources; to establish the banks, and build the credit system, and find the markets, and erect the vast factories, and supply employment for sixty million people. He could not know what a fatal blow it would be to us if all these millions of workers were suddenly thrown out of work; nor how many, not all, we confess with shame, but how many of our rich men do not come under his censure, because they do not regard wealth as an end in itself, but do regard it as a means to a greater end: the strength, solidity, and welfare of the entire country. Had Jesus known our life, and that his words were destined to carry such weight with us, he would have changed his phraseology in several spots.

As we might expect, his teachings are of two types: those that are valid for his country, his times, and his degree of culture; and those that are valid for all times, places, and de-

gress of culture. The surprising thing about it is that the first type are so few in number, and the second so many. His mind dwelt on the things of the ages, as near to Reality as a man's mind can reach. It is this element of timelessness that enables him to speak with undiminished authority to us, almost two thousand years distant from him. We have to wince as much as his actual hearers when he says: Judge not, that ye be not judged. No one exposes himself to criticism so fully as the critic. Before you venture to criticize make sure that you are above criticism.

Or, give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine. Maintain your full reverence for all that is good and true and beautiful. Never allow such properties to be degraded or abused. Or, a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things. No one ever excelled him in the powers of perception. We are told repeatedly that he knew their thoughts, and perceived their inward intent. What a man really was, his inward intent, his personal equation, such matters were almost visible to his sensitive nature. He always insisted that right there was the important spot; the fountain-head of all that man's sayings and doings. A clean, kindly, generous, honest heart was more important than volumes of fair words, and cartloads of irreproachable deeds. Such words and deeds may be accidental or sporadic; but in the case of a good man with a heart full of honesty they will be reliable. In this vein he also says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees; and by leaven he meant the insidious influence of the Pharisees. It was formalism and hypocrisy. They were failings which he hated and severely criticized in them. At this point we come to one of his most characteristic teachings, and one which he reiterates in many forms.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. An indifferent tree, encouraged by sedulous cultivation, will sometimes bring forth

good fruit. An indifferent man, under the stimulus of his surroundings, will occasionally do or say something thoroughly decent. But if the tree is really good it will always bring forth good fruit; and if the man is inwardly and honestly good he will always do or say good things. Jesus would not hesitate to say that it is more important to be a good man than to say or do good things. This was just where he differed from the Pharisees with their dangerous leaven. They being formalists taught that it was enough to say or do the right thing, even though it was said or done with a heart full of malice and all uncleanness. They represent the danger of approaching righteousness through a detailed meticulous code of specific acts: this word is right and that one wrong; this act is good and that one evil. To ask them to obey such a law was to invite them to become legalistic, formal, and hypocritical. The Pharisees were victims of their own reprehensible custom of taking their law literally; ignoring its unworded spirit and purport. It was as though they said: O God, tell me what you want me to say or do. I will say it or do it. I may speak or act with an acquiescent heart or a heart full of bitter resentment and scorn. But that is my business, not yours. The audible words and the visible acts are all you have the right to ask of me; my inward thoughts and emotions are my own.

Jesus flatly and wrathfully disagreed. How thus can you obey the Law of a God who reads the secret thoughts of your hearts as clearly as he hears the words of your lips or sees the actions of your hands? God does not want your frail bodies and their temporary words and deeds, but your immortal souls. His Law is calculated to help you to make those souls worthy of his acceptance. The leaven of Jesus was just the opposite: agreement with God in spirit, sincere and harmonious in purpose and motive.

Mention has been made several times of his habit of using transitive verbs intransitively: ask, fear not, believe, love,

have faith, forgive, and the like. He is careful to recommend the act, and equally careful to omit what they are to ask or have faith in, whom they are to love or forgive. We want to call this omission to his attention: Master, to ask and love and believe is good only provided we ask and love and believe the right things. If they are the wrong things such acts are evil. Everything depends on the objects. Is it safe for you to recommend the acts without telling us explicitly the right objects at which to aim the acts? He might well reply: Friend, would you ask that boy to swim out to that diving raft when he does not know how to swim? Would you not first urge him to learn how to swim? I am dealing with spiritually lifeless people, and must begin at the beginning. They do not aspire to a great ideal because they do not know how to aspire. They do not believe in God because they do not know how to believe.

Moreover, God cares far more what kind of a man you are than what kind of things you say or do. I am teaching them to be the kind of men to be relied upon to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. I am telling them to waste no time picking and choosing their detailed behavior. Since that which goes into the mouth cannot defile the man, but only that which comes out, I am urging them to keep their hearts clean. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.

This is well-thought-out teaching, in sharp contrast to their scribes. Their reading of the Law told the scribes not at all what to be, but specifically from moment to moment what to do, and their only concern was to sharpen the precision of the Law. Just how much mint and anise and rue must they give in tithes? At what exact moment does the Sabbath begin? What precisely constitutes work? How many ribbons may a rabbi's wife wear without doing work? How far may a man walk from home without working? What exactly constitutes home? Having satisfied themselves after

long discussion that the Sabbath begins the moment one can see three stars on Friday evening; that a man may walk three-quarters of a mile from his home without doing anything worthy of being called work; that home is any spot where there is a pair of one's shoes, it became possible for a man to plant eight pairs of shoes at intervals of three-quarters of a mile from his home and so prepare for himself a Sabbath day's journey of six miles and return without once breaking the Law: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy; in it thou shalt not do any work. Is it any wonder that Jesus was disgusted? or that he warned his disciples that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? We can understand what he meant by exceeding righteousness. A righteousness that saw the intent of the Law, and was more careful to obey the intent than the letter.

To us, and doubtless to his hearers, there is something refreshing about Jesus. The honesty and finish of his thought, the transparent purity of his spirit, the unaffected spontaneity of his disposition — these qualities we discover at once as we pass in review his Way of Life. There was nothing tortuous or furtive or devious about him, no ulterior motives, everything was out in the open, nothing hidden and nothing disguised. Once for all he accepted the old familiar mystery of life. He could neither explain it nor deny it; and we are just as much at a loss for an explanation as he. But he never allowed the familiarity to discount the mystery. His mood of wonder and reverence never wore off, as it too often does with us, but remained undiminished and uninterrupted. He saw and accepted that first and ever-present mystery of life, its marvel, its meaning, and its promise; and in that acceptance all the ingredients of reverent praise and awesome self-abasement that religion implies and worship requires were amply supplied.

With that initial attitude of wondering adoration once established, the remainder of his Way was fashioned of the

simple, straight-forward common-places of every-day experience. No requisition is made on the special providences of God. His concept of God was a God of order and method who proceeds in accordance with certain truths and principles that are eternal in their validity. Therefore God's reactions can be foretold, for they are as reliable as nature's laws are reliable to the modern scientist. There is no room in the Way of Jesus for what we call magic. God does not give signs, and resents it when asked for signs. There are no charms or amulets so potent that they can force God to deviate from his trustworthy methods of procedure. There is no dependence on the esoteric; no strain on human credulity; not a single gnosis or cabalistic formula that must first be acquired by miraculous means. No *deus ex machina* lurks in a dim corner ready to resolve a hopeless tangle of circumstance in the very nick of time. As our hymn has it:

"I seek by the path which my forefathers trod

Through the land of their sojourn, thy Kingdom of Love."

That is a perfect description of the Way of Jesus. It asks the disciple to be no more than what he is, and what his forefathers were — human souls in perishable bodies of flesh and blood, with normal equipment of human aspirations and powers, with normal handicaps of human frailty. It asks them to seek throughout the normal occasions of this earthly experience that far-off Something Better, that Kingdom of Love which intuition tells them, as it tells us all, is awaiting them somewhere in the future.

We find it a relief to make acquaintance with a religion which is content to take us as we are; and asks of us no more than to keep "the better angels of our nature" in the ascendant; and opens before our feet an ever-brightening path of self-fulfillment through the hazards and pitfalls of this earthly journey; and brings us out at last upon the heights of our manhood.

Our personal and intimate knowledge of Jesus is comparatively recent. Prior to the printing press there is an entire millenium during which the Bible was unknown to the common people. It existed only in the classical languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, which only the scholars could read. Moreover, it was supposed to be so full of symbolism, allegory and veiled allusions, that its real meaning could be secured only by interpretation; and none but the scholars of the Church were competent to interpret its words. Hence the common people were discouraged from reading the Bible for themselves even if they could. All they knew about the Bible was what their priests told them.

The change came when, thanks to the printing press and the Reformation, the common people of France, Germany and England found the Bible in their hands, and translated into their languages. From that moment and right down to the present the common people have been making their own personal acquaintance with Jesus. It has been a thrilling and revolutionizing experience.

They had been taught that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But through their acquaintance with Jesus they learned that there is such a thing as loving God, and that love is far more productive of wisdom than any amount of fear. It was like a ray of sunlight out of a cloudy sky that suddenly bathes the whole landscape in beauty and hope.

They had been taught that the only incentives to righteousness were duty and fear. The eternal fires of hell were waiting to punish their failures in righteousness, and the eternal bliss of heaven was waiting to reward their success. But they learned from Jesus that there is such a thing as doing God's will because they wanted to, and that love of God would make them want to. Forthwith duty and fear lost their authority as incentives to righteousness and were replaced by love which made the doing of God's will a happy privilege.

They had been taught that they were poor weak miserable sinners, born in sin, burdened with inherited guilt, totally depraved, and wholly unable to merit eternal life however they tried. They could not save themselves; they must *be* saved by an act of God. But they learned from Jesus that there is such a thing as self-respect; they were the offspring of the Thought of God; God was as fair and forgiving as their own fathers — and held them accountable for the sins of past generations no more than their fathers did — and cared a great deal more what they were in character and spirit than what they did — and that if they could not justify the love and confidence He reposed in them nobody else could justify it for them — and that their salvation was entirely in their own hands since they were quite competent to earn it for themselves — and that it was high time they broke this craven habit of beseeching God to do things for them, and began to use the powers he had given and do things for themselves. At once the tenor of Christian worship began to change. It ceased to be what it had been for the last twelve centuries, a long-drawn whine of peevish complaint over the things God had failed to do for them, and of clamoring supplication for what they wanted him to do. It began to be more dignified, with less emphasis on the note of supplication: "How much can I get out of God"; and more emphasis on the idea of service: "Is it possible for me to do a little something for God?"

Another surprising discovery was the unmistakable air of happiness that pervades the entire scene of his living. He was anything but a Man of Sorrows. True, he was acquainted with grief, but he had his moments of the rarest happiness the human soul can know. There was his great problem, but it was a problem of the mind involving his judgment. Once that problem was decided, his heart and spirit fell right into line without the slightest trace of self-sacrifice or self-pity. Whittier, describing his saintly old Quaker lady, tells us that "she kept her line of rectitude with love's unconscious ease."

It was so with Jesus. There is no strain or tension. Love's unconscious ease is evident throughout. Such teachings as these can hardly be put into words, but words are unnecessary. They are eloquently spoken by his presence and example. We cannot fail to see that he picked up this whole ragged shapeless proposition which we call human life, lifted it off its old basis, the incentive of fear, and set it down on a new basis, the incentive of love. The result was that instead of saying: I must, for I dread the consequences, they began to say: I want to, for I desire a taste of the happiness I see in you. In one of his sermons Dr. Phillips Brooks delivered himself of a characteristic aphorism which we cannot afford to forget: "Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully." Jesus substituted love for duty, and beautifully for well. The world can never forget.

"Enviably" is a strange word to use in connection with Jesus, but it is apt. There is something downright enviable about him. Even at this distance we can feel it. We are often prompted to apostrophize him: "Master, just what you are, leaving nothing out, counting everything in, all that you endured and suffered, the disdain that rejected you as an expendable fanatic, the contempt that spat upon you, the mockery that forced the crown of thorns upon your forehead, the implacable malice that set you up between two thieves to perish, put it all in — and still I wish I were like you."

In our eyes Jesus is foremost among those Immortals who bring to pass permanent changes in our world. He lives a few months in Galilee, a stock sample of the genus homo, he does a few things, he suffers a few trials, he speaks a few words, and, behold, the world can never again be the same. For he shows us what a man can be. The old records are all smashed to bits. Now our living and striving are brought under the criterion of a loftier ideal and a nobler example than ever. All our manhood is lustrous with a new dignity and a brighter hope. How are we to fit Jesus into the forces that

operate upon us? We have our dogmas and creeds, our symbols and liturgies, our rules of conduct and principles of justice; but he seems to defy all these. The essence that was Jesus cannot be articulated in dogma, nor expressed in creeds, nor celebrated in liturgies, nor dramatized in ritual. It is too fluid and active. It seeks the hidden springs of the heart, and does its truest work as an ingredient in the spiritual blood-stream. It is almost a biological property. Once inoculated with it, we are prompted to worship. But at once we discover that we cannot worship him — nothing so easy as that. For to worship the prophet is simply an easy substitute for doing what the prophet asks us to do. Worship is the effort to conduct a communication of praise and prayer across the chasm that separates the known from the unknown. Jesus will not be side-tracked in any such fashion. By his own insistence he is on our side of the chasm, a dweller with us in the land of the knowable and the known. We cannot worship him; we have got to worship with him, directing our adoration to his God and our God.

Nor will Jesus do our worshipping for us. His basic postulate is that we are the sons of God; and as such we not only may but must exercise our privilege of conducting our traffic with God at first hand, without advocate or mediator. Jesus would shrink from sponsoring an ecclesiastical institution that bears his name. He had no thought of establishing a new church. We must not be misled by Matthew 16, verses 18 and 19. Scholars are very generally agreed that those words about building my church upon Peter the Rock are an interpolation by some ardent churchman. With the exception of another passage which falls under the same suspicion, Matthew 18, verse 17, Jesus nowhere speaks the word church. The church is our expedient, not his. We can make it an efficacious expedient only so long as we can think of him, not as the object of our worship, but as our fellow-worshipper, kneeling beside us.

The Way of Jesus bears an unmistakably adverbial flavor. It is not a WHAT, it is a HOW. He cares nothing that a man is Romanist, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian. His only care is: How can I help him to be a good one. If we would put him where he himself would ask to be put, in our own hearts, a best beloved friend, never absent and never failing, then he would speak to us with full force and effect, and lead us in his Way, and make our hearts burn within us by his revelations of God, and also by his revelations of our own neglected, forgotten, unused selves. That is where he belongs.

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